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Ursula K. LeGuin: An Interview

Conducted by Paul Walker

You have been invited to the home of Ursula K. Le Guin to interview her. You arrive and are asked inside. "Tell me about yourself?" you ask. What does she reply?

Sure I could give you a vivid description of Mrs. Le Guin (tall, balding, full-bearded, she met me at the door with a hearty handclasp. "Come in and help us gut the elk!" she boomed.) But then I could give you other descriptions equally vivid (it was at first difficult to induce Mrs. Le Guin to speak, as she hung placidly head downward from a branch of the large catalpa tree in the drawing room.) But what is truth, as jesting Pilate remarked, and what is the good of the cult of personality, I wonder? I mean some of us are Norman Mailer, right on, but others of us are middle-aged Portland housewives. It seems to me that my public self is in my books, and my private self is and should be of real interest only to myself and family.

On to your public self—you wrote three conventional fantasy novels before you took that giant step up to Left Hand of Darkness, not only in terms of style and content, but apparently in your whole conception of the novel as a form. Where the first three seemed very timid and tradition-bound, even imitative, the last seemed a bold attempt to exploit your "sense of the novel" in all its aspects in your own terms. If this is not just my imagination, was this a gradual process or did some radical change in your thinking occur between City of Illusions and Left Hand?

Before *Left Hand* I wrote and published a fantasy novel, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, which I think is my first fully achieved book. It also marked a separation of the properly fantastic, "fairytale" element from the properly science-fictional; in the earlier published works these had been blended, more or less successfully. Since then I have written two more fantasy novels and three sf novels, but no mixtures like *Rocannon's World*. I think it is otiose to try to draw a sharp line between fantasy and sf, but there is a polarization: and I found I wrote better if I knew which hemisphere I was working in, and stayed in it.

The fantasy hemisphere is my native one, evidently. The interspersed chapters in *Left Hand*, the "local myths," represent quite directly the efforts of my unconscious to explain to my conscious mind just what I was doing—where I was going—as I worked out (before

and during the writing) the apparently rational, science-fictional actions and motivations and situations of the book. When in difficulties, in other words, I fall back into my native tongue, which is that of non-intellectualized fantasy, daydream, symbol, myth.

The unity of tone of *Lathe of Heaven* is easily explainable in these terms: I was drawn, as naturally as by gravity, to the subject—the scientific study of dreaming—and for several years read all I could find on it (most of it very well written, and fully available to interested laymen). The novel grew with equal naturalness and felicity out of what I had learned. I could extrapolate from a firm scientific base without leaving dreamland; I could work with archetypes without imperilling the functions of the intellect. A lovely subject. (I feel that Roger Zelazny may be “bi-polarized” somewhat as I am, and perhaps it is significant that the finest thing he has written, to my taste, is “He Who Shapes”—a similar excursion into psychological frontiers.)

Why no short stories before the novels?

I had published 6 or 7 short stories in Cele Lalli's *Amazing and Fantastic*. I had written a great many stories, before that; my first story (age 9 I think) was about a man who sees elves, and the elves are after him, but nobody believes in them, and they get him. They came through the keyhole of his room with a noise like THUNK! kr-r-r-rinter. This was only the beginning.

Out of the many stories I wrote thereafter, few were good, and of them only one has been published (in a Little Magazine in the late '50's). I don't write many short stories now, and they often turn out to be seedlings for novels (as witness the story “Winter's King” in *Orbit 5*, which, though it appeared after the novel, was a mere first approach to Gethen, the planet where *Left Hand* takes place—I hadn't even noticed yet that the Gethenians were bi-sexual.) I don't much like to write or to read short stories, the form is not congenial to me (unless the story is by Borges or Chekhov). I like novels.

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Your work has the atmosphere and substance of myth. What about the use of myth in an sf story? Some complain that such writers as Delany and Zelazny use myths as a crutch and that in themselves myths were meant as explanations of natural phenomena and as such are closed-books while sf as a literature of possibilities must always be open-ended, originating its own mythology rather than emulating the myths of the past. How do you feel about this?

Perhaps it is clear by now what my attitude towards the "use of myth" must be. Essentially I feel that my job is not to use myths, but to be used by myths.

This attitude doesn't preclude the deliberate "use" of myth. I did so in *Rocannon's World* (the introductory episode is a retelling of "Brisingham's Necklace" from the Norse mythos, and Rocannon's wanderings, origin, standing in the fire, etc. are partly inspired by the doings of Odin.) I grew up reading the Norse myths and they have always meant incomparably more to me than the Greek or any other. They are in fact part of my "childhood lore," they shaped my imagination; to me the reality of Ragnarok lies on the same profound, subrational level as the Crucifixion or the Resurrection lies for one brought up as a Christian. One may no longer "believe in" it, but it remains a basic symbol, a mode of one's imagination—both a limiting, and an enabling, mode.

But I suppose I don't entirely approve of the deliberate, rational use of myth which does not arise from these deep levels of childhood or of affinitive sympathy. If I tried to write using Christian symbology, for instance, I would write an essentially hollow book, and make a fool of myself.

The description of myths as "things that never were and always are" is a fair one. Myth never was a mere uninformed attempt to rationalize the cosmos, to explain why it thunders or why men suffer. The achievements of intellect do not invalidate myths in the least. Their emotional, aesthetic, psychic, *creative* power is unimpaired. (Consider in what form Kekulé conceived the benzene ring in dream!) Their function never was simply intellectual, and they cannot be intellectualized. One can read foreign myths purely for aesthetic pleasure, of course; but to start playing with them, as a creative artist, as if they were arbitrary constructs, is both arrogant and dangerous. We talk glibly about archetypes, but we tend to forget that Jung warned that when an archetype breaks through into the conscious, without being reintegrated, what results is psychosis.

Art, of course, is one of the most powerful methods of reintegration. But merely to invoke an archetype, to retell a myth in scientific fancy-dress, to drag a trail of symbols and references through one's story hoping thus to give it dignity and power, isn't art; it's just messing around with the materials. The real thing is to find the native symbology of your own creative unconscious—whether it fits into one of the old mythic forms, or makes its own personal variations on the inevitable themes—and try to integrate it in terms comprehensible to others, and aesthetically solid. That can be a risky, troublesome business, but it isn't trivial.

This is why I don't consider sf a trivial art form, despite the poverty of most of its achievements so far. At its best—when its practitioners take it seriously—it is a new integrative effort, a way of enabling the contemporary, scientific, individualistic consciousness to achieve the collective creative power of myth, to cope with thunder and suffering by aesthetic, integrative means. Frankenstein's monster is as genuine, and as tremendous, a myth as Prometheus. He came out of Mary Shelley's unconscious, and now he exists in all of ours.

We have no Shelley or Wells at the moment; we may have one tomorrow, or never; I don't know that it much matters. We have a tradition, a very rare thing in fiction at the moment. The individual artist working in a live tradition knows that every idea, every innovation, counts, is not wasted: because it contributes to a whole. The whole is the body of science fiction. Though fully achieved individual works are very rare in sf, yet the body of sf of the last 25 years has had a very great effect on the modern imagination. In the drawings of school-children, the plans of engineers, the dreams of housewives, debased by advertisers or ennobled by astronomers, the myths we have been working out in science fiction are alive, destructive and creative as the ancient gods.

You refer to concepts of "dream," "myth," "conscious," and "unconscious" as creative forces. You say of the "reality of Ragnarok" that "it remains a basic symbol, a mode of one's imagination—both a limiting, and an enabling mode." So I feel I am dealing with a theory of the creative process. Could you be more specific about how these various factors work together to produce a unified work of art? What do you mean by "a mode of one's imagination" as it applies to you? By a "limiting" and "enabling mode" etc.?

I have no theory of the creative process—merely *ad hoc* ideas. My mind is not theoretical; all my ideas are, essentially, metaphors.

Very roughly: I see the "unconscious" (via Freud & Jung) as the source of the psychic forces, which may be—if repressed, denied, lied about, misunderstood—destructive; or—if controlled by intellect, self-understanding, and compassion—creative. In other words, Strength is as good as Reason makes it. Or in other words, rocks can be used to bash in your brothers' skulls, or to build a house with.

A "mode of the imagination" is self-explanatory, isn't it?

A "limiting" mode is likely to be an "enabling" one—we're discussing art, after all. Aesthetic example: the sonnet (from Petrarch through Wordsworth—when its limits had been reached, it was abandoned). Scientific example: Mathematics.

You say, "[SF] At its best—when its practitioners take it seriously—it is a new integrative effort, a way of enabling the contemporary scientific, individualistic consciousness to achieve the collective creative power of myth, to cope with thunder and suffering by aesthetic, integrative means." Would you clarify that? What is the nature of the contemporary, scientific, individualistic consciousness? The nature of the present day thunder and suffering? And just what does it mean to integrate them? How does it help us cope with them?

"Contemporary etc. consciousness"—I meant simply, and roughly, as opposed to the older or "primitive" pre-scientific, more or less tribal, consciousness.

"Present-day thunder and suffering"—same as they ever were. The big noise in the sky. The pain in the bowels. The fear of death.

I don't say that to try to face them and make sense of them is *to be able* to cope with them, or integrate them into a livable life that includes hope and the pursuit of happiness; but I am sure that *not* to try to do so—to evade, repress, deny their existence—is fatal to clear thinking and humane behavior.

The problem of "seriousness" in sf is much discussed these days. The question might be asked: how can a serious-minded writer take sf seriously within its own tradition?

Most every writer I talk to takes it seriously, but as profession; and eavesdropping on a gathering of writers is like sitting in on an assistant buyers' luncheon. Many of these people have a sentimental regard for sf and a cold, cynical attitude toward it, or writing itself, as art. On the other hand, many of the serious-minded writers I've talked to are exiles (through lack of talent or ability) from the mainstream whose loyalties clearly rest in the mainstream. They quickly become contemptuous of sf and its traditions and feel trapped in the genre, coming to loathe everyone and everything in it.

I am bored by the attitude you mention, the cynical, "businessman's" attitude towards our art. Of course we get paid; work is paid for in a money economy. In self-respect and out of respect for our work we should try to get paid fairly, too. And we are among the lucky ones; like all craftsmen we get paid for doing what we like to do. But to be cynical and profiteering about this is an insult to all the poor who do work they don't want to do because capitalists see to it that they can't get bread otherwise; and it is a contemptible abandonment of the artist's or artisan's standards—contemptible because unnecessary: we have no need at all to accept the profit motive as the only "real" one. It is cowardice to do so, in those who get enough to eat. Yes, I think Ernest Hemingway was a coward, for saying that a "writer writes for money," and I'd like to see if he would have had the guts to say that to, say, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

I find the distinction between "serious-minded" and "professional" writers misleading. A professional is somebody with a profession. He can be serious, frivolous,

idealistic, or profit-oriented, and still be a professional—teacher, scientist, lawyer, writer, what have you. What he is *not*, is an amateur. That is, he has undertaken his calling as a life-work—not an hors-d'oeuvre or a dish of pickles, but the main course. If it doesn't pay, he may make a living out of another job or even another profession; but the *commitment* is the touchstone. *Money* is not. Spinoza made his living grinding lenses (a second profession), does that make him an unprofessional philosopher? Keats died poor and scarcely known (a failure) does that make him an amateur poet?

Success and failure in economic terms have to do with economics: in the last analysis they have nothing to do with the success or failure of aesthetic or intellectual work in aesthetic or intellectual terms. (They affect the *workman* of course; financial failure can kill him, financial success can fill his belly and raise his self-esteem. But if a writer allows fear of financial failure or desire for financial success to influence the *work as he does it*, he has sold out; he is no longer a professional writer, but a professional money-maker. His commitment is not to his craft, but to marketeering; he has become a capitalist instead of a worker. And he usually begins, then, to refer to himself proudly as a "professional.")

In a previous letter you said, "My ideas of novel writing mostly come straight from E. M. Forster's 'Aspects of the Novel' . . ." What are your ideas on the novel? And the State of the Novel in sf?

E. M. Forster says what he says infinitely better than I could say it, so I won't. My working definition of the novel has always been his: "The novel is a prose fiction of a certain extent." To this I recently learned an addition which I believe perfects it: "The novel is a prose fiction of a certain extent, which is flawed."

The state of the novel in sf?—Better than it used to be, when there were no sf novels, only romances and long tales. Still poor, not because of lack of talent, but (I think) lack of aesthetic commitment. I mean, if we're talking about a craft, OK, the field is full of real master craftsmen; but the novel is an art form, and we have few who are ready to admit that. Or to take the personal risk involved in trying to practice it.

The praise and affection of sf fans can become a real liability here: they love you, they love your stuff, and then you turn around and slap them in the face by *not* just going through your tricks again and producing the mixture as before, but some new highflown difficult thing, as if you didn't care what they liked and didn't like. Well, you do care; and you hope that eventually they will understand and feel honored by your respect for them.

The patronizing attitude and opportunism of many sf publishers (not all) is an even graver hindrance to the effort to practice sf as an art, and I hope that our young writers will not accept it—will not agree to set their sights low, or tailor to a market, but will set the integrity of their own disciplined imagination before all easier rewards.

You say, "The patronizing attitude and opportunism of many sf publishers (not all) is an even greater hindrance to the effort to practice sf as an art." Would you elaborate?

I just meant that so long as there are publishers who buy junk because they can sell it easily, there will be writers who write junk because they can sell it easily. This is no doubt inevitable, and a mere instance of Sturgeon's Law. But now and then I think people—writers or editors—who cherish excellence really ought to stand up and observe that the situation is a little shameful, the standards are unnecessarily low. People like me who feel very passionately about art tend to rail at other artists who sell out, tailor to a market, cater to fashions, etc.; and this isn't fair. Guiltier than the poor hacks are the rich publishers. Who's worse, after all, the slave or the slave-owner?

I never seen a happy slave
I never even known one
But I can tell you anyhow
I'd rather be than own one

"Setting" plays a central role in all your novels. How do you feel about "setting"?

The origin of *Left Hand of Darkness* was a mind's eye vision of two people hauling a

sledge, seen from a distance in a great waste of ice. The whole story was in that scene, it was just a matter of releasing it.

Well, what is setting? A novel takes place somewhere. Some appear not to, but these are tales, psychological experiments, thrillers, etc., not novels. Even with introspective Dostoyevsky or Austen if you think about it you know and can remember where each conversation took place—even what weather and time of day (though Dostoyevsky days tend to have about 66 hours). With broader-scope novelists such as Dickens and Tolstoy and Solzhenitsyn the “setting” is as fully developed as the characters; and character, action, place, and interval are all interrelated in profound and complex harmonies and tensions.

Sf in its relationship to fantasy has always had a strong and healthy inheritance of vivid descriptive writing (Jack Vance is the master here.) Sf intellectualized has often got on without any real sense of place or period; conventionalized superficial phrases suffice to present a spaceship or an alien world, and all the rest is action. This produces a kind of slick wilfulness, a reality-dodging like that of the detective novel, where everything is cerebral and nothing matters. I think I would have quit reading sf for good—and thus perhaps never have written it—if “Alpha Ralpa Boulevard” hadn’t come along and proved what, after all, could be done.

If you want strong feelings, you are going to find yourself concerned with real things; and if you want a vital connection with science, again you are going to find yourself concerned with real things. Arbitrary rearrangements of abstractions and generalizations are showy but fake. Consider the great final visions of *The Time Machine*, where with all the hallucinatory vividness of a nightmare Wells describes the landscape of entropy. Consider the terrible glow of the fires of “Nightfall”—a poorly written story, an incredible concrete vision. It is just this, this controlled, rationally informed, intellectually disciplined, and emotionally dynamic kind of vision that is the singular privilege of sf. A kind of wild exactness. You can touch the alien soil, it is *there*.

What about “plot”? The writers you have mentioned (Austen, Dostoyevsky, Solzhenitsyn) have written novels of character, mood, and ideas, but have not had to contend with the specter of “Plot” that confronts every sf writer. There has to be a plot. And, almost inevitably, it has to be familiar.

E. M. Forster’s definition: “‘The king died and then the queen died’ is a story. ‘The king died and then the queen died of grief’ is a plot. The time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it.”—I wish I could quote the whole page (p. 130, “Aspects of the Novel”).

I just completed a novel, by the way, in which the time-sequence is *not* preserved, and only the causality holds the thing together. I did not really intend this, it just insisted on being that way.

Any true novel, sf or non-sf, has a plot.

If the plot is conventional, the novel is inferior.

I think you are taking “plot” to mean “ingeniousness”—as in a mystery story. I take it to mean the *coherent structure* of the novel, which arises from the interplay of the characters, situations, events, ideas.

I see no need for looking any differently at the plotting of an sf novel than of any other kind of novel (except perhaps the mystery story: but my absolute lack of interest in detective novels signifies an absolute incompetence to discuss them). If the only element of the book is action (he did this and then he did this and then he did this) you have a story: current example—most simple sword-and-sorcery tales. But if there are characters and ideas, with any complexity of interplay, you have a plot. Sf or non-sf. Lots of action or little.

You say, “if you want a vital connection with science . . .” But most young sf writers not only do not want that, but will proudly profess their ignorance of science, and their hostility to it. Yet you, who began as a fantasy writer, have written “Nine Lives” and Lathe of Heaven and speak of the “vitality of science.” What do you mean by that? Have you suffered a sea change? Do you really find science “relevant”?

I hope you are exaggerating about the number of “young sf writers who proudly

profess their hostility to science." I am no more surprised by anti-intellectualism than any Jew is surprised by anti-Semitism; Jews and intellectuals learn what they're up against very young; but it still hurts.

Have I changed from a pro-fantastist to a pro-scientist? Not at all. I see no incompatibility, no need to choose one and exclude the other. As a kid I intended to be a biologist and a poet. (Modest type kid.) A disastrous incapacity (innate or acquired?) for math cut me down to one field of ambition. Between 18 and 24 I was rather anti-science, largely out of mere self-assertion, but also because there was a lot of crude optimism, reductionism, and arrogance among scientists at that time (there still is, but it was grosser in the 40's and early 50's—and incidentally was faithfully reflected in much sf of the time). Then I gradually returned to my natural interest and delight in the exploration of science, especially along the advancing edges of biology, anthropology, astronomy and cosmology, and physics—all of which fields have found marvellous interpreters to the interested ignoramus, many of them being very great active scientists. Certain specific fields such as sleep and dream research, freshwater microbiology, etc. exert a particular fascination. I have this thing for *Paramecia*. . . . Clearly my knowledge is that of a typical amateur, spotty and superficial, but it does have the quality which the word "amateur" should remind us of now and then—it does involve real, disinterested love. To follow a scientific demonstration or argument and to understand it gives tremendous pleasure, and I am grateful to the source of that pleasure. I exercise the rights of the amateur—to be selective, and passionate—and if my interest in science is an aesthetic one, I see no need to apologize or defend this, since Einstein himself observed that what he was after was something beautiful.

Do I find science "relevant"? How I hate that word. Yes. On all levels. Whether one is doing the laundry or deciding who to vote for or contemplating the ineffable mysteries of Existence, the discoveries, the material contributions, the mental attitudes and methods of science are essential to both action and thought. To pretend that they are not, in the year 1972, is a grotesque evasion of reality. While you set the dials on your automatic washer and while the missiles wait in their silos, are you to pretend that science has no influence on your life? When you try to think about your place, and man's place, in the world, are you going to ignore the ecologists, the DDT manufacturers, Heisenberg, and Copernicus, and just figure it all out from scratch?—As this is precisely what a lot of mainstream fiction does, I find it painfully irrelevant. What I like about sf is that it does try to integrate the findings and the guesses of science into its world-picture. It tries to pull things together.

I am against "scientism." To respect and enjoy science doesn't at all imply a belief that all the technological applications of science and their unlimited expansion are good, or necessary. Indeed to exert the private moral option, the act of conscience, in certain fields of science, is urgently necessary—right now. But I don't see how you can have any option if you don't know anything. To dismiss science (including history) as "irrelevant" now, is to dismiss yourself as morally impotent and intellectually trivial. Zap!

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The International Scene

SF IN FRENCH

THE IMMORTALS, by René Barjavel. Tr. from French by Eileen Finletter. William Morrow & Co., 1974. 239 pp. \$6.95 (paperback: Ballantine 24626, 1975. \$1.50)

An interesting feature of this novel is the author's pretense that his characters live in the recent past and present. He cleverly combined events of '50's-'70's politics with a plausible different scheme to explain interconnections that weren't really so, with a love-hate reiteration of persons like Kennedy, Krushchev, DeGaulle, Mao and Elizabeth II. Not bland at all here, *she* is almost a minor heroine.

As in his earlier tale, *The Ice People*, Barjavel imagines a World of If peopled, gadgeted, and swooped away from the western-eastern Earth, but still on it. The story isn't science fiction, but rather fiction whose supposed scientists are important as consultants for various emergencies. Investigations nowadays are so minutely fragmented that no single person does comprehend everyone else's research and reflections. The novel seems to be written from outside, not inside science. Its sex scenes were neither appealing nor repulsive to me; they are few and mercifully brief. Food is rarely mentioned, yet twice we hear of "real French breakfasts" fondly including croissants.

I prefer the original title, *Le Grand Secret*, finding the story tame for nearly a hundred pages. The plot's pace quickens in the final chapters, ending violently. The movie will probably resemble the style of *The Day of the Jackal*. The translator's prose is smooth, a commendably easy-reading English which avoids banality.

—Carolann Purcell

☆ ☆ ☆

From Denoël's famous international "Présence du futur" series, the latest important not-in-English title seems the Russian Strugatski brothers' *Le lundi commence le samedi* (Paris 1974, Moscow 1966). The oddball title is meant to convey the atmosphere of the research think-tank that is the real "hero" of the novel. Privalov, the narrator, takes us into the institute, and everything in the novel is told first-person; there are "adventures" like a comic research explosion and a short time-machine jaunt, but the main emphasis is on the interaction of the regular researchers, the departmental atmosphere of intermittent social war and collaboration. The characters themselves are perhaps only 2-D, but this professional atmosphere is funny, authentic and no doubt partly autobiographical.

Now for the oddball bit: what Privalov conducts us into, is an "Institute of scientific research in magic and occultism." That is, *Monday* occurs in an sf future where the traditional magic-witchcraft world has been properly researched, checked and (partly) verified. As a result, certain folklore characters, not all "fantastic," are on the payroll. One researcher is a surviving Grand Inquisitor. The naughtiest "religious" joke concerns the janitor of the place: about 2,000 years old, He achieved eventually such complete perfection that He could no longer maintain contact with the material world. In boredom He resigned His old job and signed on at the institute as custodian.

The "time"-machine jaunt I mentioned is not into "our" future, but into the imaginative "future" of speculative sf. This leads to special travel complications. Instead of second-by-second existence, the daring pilot must accustom himself to large stretches of outer "space": time-belts not occupied by the fiction of Lucan, Heinlein or Buck Rogers. In the literary future, dress is idiosyncratic. If the author describes his hero coming into the cabin as wearing a heavy beard and a yellow shirt, then the shirt and the beard are his total outfit when we see him during time-travel.

The Strugatski's are engaged then in the same attempt to media-mix traditional fantasy and hard sf as was John Campbell in the legendary *Other Worlds* (though Campbell never shared the more theoretical passions of Lem or the two Russians). The emphasis of the book is on theorizing and argument, not the continual rain of background throwaway jokes of which I've given some examples. For instance, the institute is conveniently located near Bald Mt. and there is a "climactic" explosion (end of Part II) from an experiment in matter-condensing human desires and ambitions in one outlet. But the real joke is not the end-joke of the explosion but the pre-explosion "serious" humorous theoretical argument

about what happens when you concentrate ambition and ability. OK, you get what the permissive liberals call Renaissance Man, but is the modern Renaissance Man an egocentric paunch like Henry VIII? The term is supposed to denote somebody like Leonardo, but Charles Manson considered the same word covered him after he read a work of speculative sf published five years before *Monday*. The reader is expected no doubt to enjoy the comic djinn produced by the explosion, but to identify himself also with the theoretical argument.

Monday is an attempt to fuse the main international sf tradition with that of classic 19th-century Russian imaginative literature. It is also as a book very hip about Western intellectual currents. The poets used structurally in the plot include both Pushkin and the contemporary British Christopher Logue. Joe McCarthy is used as a folklore-monster archetype in a way that may seem coldwar paranoia from the Soviet side, but exactly duplicates faculty-liberal references in books published within the last year. That is, the Strugatskis are not only kidding old wet Joe, but they are accurately aware of his fantasy-folklore position in postwar campus political history. *Monday* can then be recommended as a far-out specimen of the campus novel. For the U.S. buyer, though, it needs a translator who can catch most of the scientific-literary jokes and write the same kind of comic prose as Ron Goulart or the de Camp of *Other Worlds*.

—Mark Purcell

Coming Events

March

- 5-7 ARTKANE, The Science Fiction Art Convention, at the Hilton Hotel, Wilmington, North Carolina. GoH: Kelly Freas. Adv. reg: \$8. For info: Artkane, c/o Bill Hawkins, R.D. 1, Box 344, Hockessin, De. 19707
- 12-14 STAR TREK: HOUSTON at the Sheraton Houston Hotel, Houston, Texas. Reg: \$12.50, \$5/day at door. For info: Star Trek Houston, 5600 N. Freeway, Houston, Tex. 77022. Phone (713) 692-0205
- 12-14 LEPRECON II at E. Van Buren Ramada Inn, Phoenix, Ariz. GoH: Roger Zelazny. Adv. reg: \$4, \$5 at door. For info: Leprecon, Box 1749, Phoenix, Ariz. 85001
- 19-21 MARCON 11 at Neil House Motor Hotel, Columbus, Ohio. GoH: Joe Haldeman, Fan GoH: Randy Bathurst. Adv. reg: \$4, \$5 at door. For info: Larry Smith, 194 E. Tulane, Columbus, Ohio 45202

April

- 9-11 LUNACON '76 at the Statler Hilton Hotel in NYC. Adv. reg: \$4 to March 31, \$6 at door. For info: Walter R. Cole, 1171 E. 8th Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230
- 16-19 UNICON II at Melbourne University, Australia. Reg: \$A7. For info: Alan Wilson, Physics Dept., Melbourne Univ., Parkville Victoria 3052, Australia
- 16-18 BALTICON 10 at the Hunt Valley Inn, Baltimore, Md. GoH: Isaac Asimov, Fan GoHs: Suzanne Tompkins & Jerry Kaufman. Adv. reg: \$4, \$6 at door. For info: Norman Schwarz, 7901 Oakwood Rd., Glen Burnie, Md. 21061
- 16-18 EQUICON/FILMCON 1976 at the Marriott Hotel, Los Angeles. Reg: \$10 to April 10, \$15

at door, \$6 supporting. For info: Box 23127, Los Angeles, Calif. 90023

- 16-18 MINICON 11 at the Hotel Leamington, Minneapolis. GoHs: Ed Hamilton & Leigh Brackett, Fan GoHs: Leigh & Norbert Couch. For info: Don Blyly, 343 E. 19 St., Apt. 5B, Minneapolis, Minn. 55404
- 16-19 MANCON 5 at Owings Park, Manchester, England. GoH: Robert Silverberg, Fan GoH: Peter Roberts. For info: Bill Burns, 48 Lou Ave., Kings Park, N.Y. 11754; or Brian Robinson, 9 Linwood Grove, Manchester M12 4QH England
- 24 14 Annual COUNT DRACULA SOCIETY AWARDS DINNER at the University Hilton, on Figueroa at USC, Los Angeles. \$12/person, payable to Count Dracula Society. For info: Dr. Donald A. Reed, 334 W. 54th Street, Los Angeles, Calif. 90037

May

- 15-16 BENELUXCON 4, Noordwijkerhout, Netherlands. For info: Paul v. Oven, Rietors, Eemnes 2670, Netherlands
- 24-30 3rd FRENCH SF CONVENTION, Metz, France. Reg: 30,FF supporting; 80,FF attending. For info: Philippe R. Hupp, 7 rue Franchet d'Esperey, F-57000 Metz, France
- 28-31 AUTOCLAVE at Howard Johnson's New Center Motor Lodge, Detroit. GoH: Gene Wolfe & Donn Brazier. Adv. reg: \$5, \$6 after May 1, \$7 at door. For info: Autoclave, Box 04097, Detroit, Mich. 48204
- 28-31 DISCLAVE 76 at the Sheraton Park Hotel, Washington, D.C. GoH: Philip Klass (William Tenn). Adv. reg: \$3, \$5 after May 21. For info: Alexis Gilliland, 4030 8th St. South, Arlington, Va. 22204

June

4-6 KUBLA KHWANDRY at the Music City Rodeway Inn, Nashville, Tenn. GoH: Don Wollheim. Adv. reg: \$7.50, \$8.50 at door. For info: Ken Moore, 647 Devon Dr., Nashville, Tenn. 37220

4-7 SCANCON 76 at the Stockholm Inst. of Tech. Student Union. GoH: Jack Vance. Reg: \$10 attending, \$2.25 supporting. For info: Scancon '76, Box 3273, Stockholm S-10365 Sweden

11-14 D-CON at the Sheraton-Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas. GoH: Robert Silverberg. Adv. reg: \$7 to March 1, \$10 after, \$3 supporting. For info: D-Con 76, 2515 Perkins St., Fort Worth, Tex. 76103

13-15 SFIR 76 at Hotel de la Ville, Ferrara, Italy. For info: Altair-4, SF Hobbit Club, Via Boccaleone 26, Ferrara, Italy

18-20 SFLAGGCON at the Hotel Commodore, NYC. Hans Stefan Santesson Memorial Convention. Adv. reg: \$5 to May 31, \$6 at door. For info: Gerry Tishman, 37-06 80th St., Jackson Heights, N.Y. 11272

25-29 SF EXPO 76 at the New York Hilton, NYC. Toastmaster: Isaac Asimov. Adv. reg: \$10 supporting, \$18.50 attending. For info: Science Fiction Services, 2 Church St., Montclair, N.J. 07042

July

2-5 WESTERCON 29 at the Hyatt House Hotel, Los Angeles, GoH: Horace L. Gold, Fan GoH: Gregg Calkins. Reg: \$5 to May 31, \$6 after, \$3 supporting. For info: Westercon XXIX, P.O. Box 5384, Mission Hills, Calif. 91345

8-11 SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL STAR TREK CONVENTION, in Seattle, Wash. For info: S.I.S.T.C., Convention Headquarters, 280 Kipp St., Hackensack, N.J. 07601

30-Aug. 1 RIVERCON 2 in Louisville, Ky. For info: FOSFA, Box 8251, Louisville, Ky. 40208

August

13-14 INTERCON at the Tri Arc Travelodge, Salt Lake City. Combination Star Trek & sf con. Reg: \$9 to May 1, \$12 after. For info: Intercon, Box 11057, Salt Lake City, Utah 48147

17-19 BUBONICON 7 at the Ramada Inn, Albuquerque, New Mexico. GoH: Bill Rotsler. Reg: \$4 to July 31, \$5 after. For info: Roy Tackett, 915 Green Valley Rd. NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107

19-22 EUROCON 3 in Poznan, Poland. Reg: \$10 attending, closes March 31. For info: Pierre Versins, CH-1463 Rovray, Rovray, Switzerland; or Vernon Brown, Pharmacy Dept., Univ. of Aston, Gosta Green, Birmingham B4 7ET, U.K.

27-29 DEEPSOUTHCON XIV in Atlanta, Ga. Reg: \$7. For info: Steve Hughes, 5831 Hillside Dr., Doraville, Ga. 30040

27-29 WIENCON-SFCD, Jahreskonvent, Wien, Austria. Reg: 100,- austrian. For info: Alfred Vejchar, A-1180 Wien, Naaffgasse 13, Austria

September

2-6 MIDAMERICON (34th World Science Fiction Convention) at Hotel Muehlebach, Kansas City, Mo. GoH: Robert A. Heinlein, Fan GoH: George Barr. Adv. reg. to April 30: \$20 attending, \$6 supporting. For info: P.O. Box 221, Kansas City, Mo. 64141

24-26 PGHLANGE VIII at the Viking Motel, Pittsburgh, Pa. GoH: Joe Haldeman. Adv. reg: \$4, \$5 at door. For info: Barbara Geraud, 1202 Benedum Trees Bldg., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222

October

1-3 BOUCHERCON at the Americana Hotel, Culver City, Calif. Mystery con. Reg: \$4. For info: Len & June Moffatt, Box 4456, Downey, Calif. 90241

29-31 ALPHA DRACONIS at the Holiday Inn, downtown Toronto. SF, fantasy, films, comics con. Reg: \$5 to June 30, \$7 to September 30, \$10 after. For info: Draco Film Society, 1384 Ludbrook Ct., Mississauga, Ontario, Canada L5J 3P4

29-31 2nd WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION in NYC. For info: Thom Anderson, 1643 W. 10th St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11223

November

5-7 NOVACON 6 in Birmingham, England. GoH: Dave Kyle. Reg: £1.00 supporting. For info: Helen Eling, 124 Galton Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B67 5JS England

December

10-12 ARKON-ORLANDO at the Sheraton Towers Hotel, Orlando, Fla. SF, Perry Rhodan, Star Trek, comics con. Reg: \$10. For info: Tim Whalen, 9324 Tovito Drive, Fairfax, Va. 22030

Information supplied in this list is the latest available to us, including all changes received prior to closing date.

Coming Attractions

ARKHAM HOUSE FORECASTS

- Lovecraft, H.P. Selected Letters IV. April. \$12.50
 Selected Letters V. June. \$12.50
 Bowen, Marjorie. Kecksies and Other Twilight
 Tales. Summer. \$7.50
 Derleth, August. The Solar Pons Omnibus.
 Summer. \$25.00
 Shiel, M.P. Prince Zaleski and Cummings King
 Monk. Fall. \$7.00
 Lumley, Brian. The Horror at Oakdeene and
 others. Fall. \$7.50

BALLANTINE MARCH TITLES

- Brunner, John. The Shockwave Rider. 24853.
 \$1.50
 Arrow, William. Return to the Planet of the Apes.
 25122. \$1.50
 Foster, Alan Dean. Star Trek Log Six. 24655.
 \$1.50
 del Rey, Lester, ed. The Best of C. L. Moore.
 24752. \$1.95

HARCOURT SPRING TITLES

- Willard, Nancy. The Well-Mannered Balloon. April.
 \$5.50. Age 4-8

- Travers, P.L. Mary Poppins Opens the Door.
 Voyager AVB103, April. \$2.45
 Mary Poppins in the Park. Voyager AVB102,
 April. \$2.45

HARPER SPRING JUVENILES

- Rodgers, Mary. A Billion for Boris. Trophy, April.
 \$1.50
 Baum, Thomas. It Looks Alive to Me! April. \$5.50
 Hunter, Mollie. The Kelpie's Pearls. April. \$5.95

PUTNAM SPRING TITLES

- Le Guin, Ursula K. The Word for World is Forest.
 April. \$6.95
 Simak, Clifford D. Shakespeare's Planet. May.
 \$6.95
 Bester, Alfred. The Light Fantastic. May. \$7.95
 Castle, William. Step Right Up! I'm Gonna Scare
 the Pants off America. June. \$8.95

SF BOOK CLUB APRIL BOOKS

- Clarke, Arthur C. Imperial Earth. \$2.49
 Carr, Terry, ed. Creatures from Beyond. \$1.98

Have You Read?

- Baum, L. Frank. "The Wizard of Oz" adapt. by
 Lewis Mahlmann & David Cadwalader Jones.
 (play) Plays, Feb. p. 55-64
 Berger, Arthur Asa. "Star Trek" chapter in his
TV-guided American (Walker, 1976)
 Bernstein, Paula. "Star Trek Fans are Out of This
 World." New York Daily News, Feb. 2, p.34
 Burns, John F. "Earthly Rivalries Have 'Star Trek'
 Promoters in Orbit." New York Times, Feb. 12
 p.33
 Chernow, Ron. "Colonies in Space May Turn out
 to be Nice Places to Live." Smithsonian, Feb.
 p.62-9
 "Conventioneer, 12, Lofts Trial Balloon: 'Star
 Trek Lives!'.. New York Times, Jan. 26,
 p.25
 Cooper, B. Lee. "Futurescope." (teaching outlines
 with sf readings) AV Instruction, Jan. p.42-8
 The Electric Company Magazine, Feb., 50¢ (space
 edition)
 Emmett, Arielle. "Space: 1999; Adventures in
 Science 'Faction'" Science Digest, Nov.
 p.89-92
 Hunter, Mollie. "One World" pt.2 (lecture on
 fantasy) Horn Book Magazine, Feb. p.32-8

- Huntington, John. "Science Fiction and the
 Future." College English, Dec. p.345-52
 Jonas, Gerald. "Of Things to Come." (Imperial
 Earth) New York Times Book Review, Jan. 18,
 p.20-21
 Leogrande, Ernest. "Speaking to Spock." New
 York Daily News, Jan. 23, p.54
 Lewis, Dan. "Skin, Bones, and a Few Transistors."
 (Bionic Woman) The Sunday Record (Bergen
 County) TV Week, Jan. 18, p.5+cover
 Newton, Charles. "Underground Man, Go Home!"
 (reading interests of college students and sf)
 College English, Dec. p.337-44
 Rahn, Suzanne, adapt. "Night of the Trolls."
 (play) Plays, Feb. p.45-8
 Read, the Magazine for Reading and English, Nov.
 26; entire 2-part issue devoted to sf, including
 7" LP of "Donovan's Brain"
 Reynolds, Robert C. "The Geomorphology of
 Middle-Earth." Swansea Geographer, v.12,
 1974, p.67-71
 "Star Trek Galaxy Seen Pulling 30,000 to Mad.
 Sq. Garden." Variety, Jan. 14, p.1+
 Toolen, Tom. "The Trekkies Are Here." Sunday
 Record (Bergen County), Jan. 18, p.B1+

S F and the Cinema

A BOY AND HIS DOG LGJaf presentation. Produced by Alvy Moore and directed by L.Q. Jones. Screenplay by Jones, based on the novella by Harlan Ellison. Starring Don Johnson, Susanne Benton, Tim McIntire, Charles McGraw, Jason Robards, Alvy Moore, Helene Winston. 87 minutes.

The Year 2024 A.D. On the arid and brutal plains of Bakersfield, California, the horrific reality of the future is frightfully executed on the screen in *A Boy and His Dog*. A masterpiece of internal irony and incisive dialogue, *A Boy and His Dog*, starring Don Johnson and his everpresent and precocious dog, Blood, is fast becoming a cultist object d'art and an underground magnet for science fiction enthusiasts and apocalyptic visionaries.

Don Johnson portrays a fearless nomadic warrior in a world altered beyond all recognition by a great nuclear holocaust and inhabited by scattered bands of cutthroats, crazies, screamers and other assorted disreputable fringe elements. Aided by his telepathic dog, Blood (who is actually the brains of the outfit), Johnson begins an incredible saga of misadventure that will inevitably challenge the only thing of lasting value in his world—his friendship with Blood.

It is a world in which women are scarce, and the few that remain have for obvious reasons gone into hiding. Johnson, contending with an unquenched hormonal urge for companionship, drives his friend Blood in an unending search for a female, any female. Using his unfailing olfactory abilities to good stead, Blood leads Johnson to a gypsy camp where boy meets girl, in this case the hauntingly beautiful Suzanne Benton: The Objet d'sex.

The girl, in turn, entices Johnson down into the mysterious Underground, a world inhabited by Middle Americans striving to preserve and perpetuate Middle America, circa Topeka, Kansas. A world complete with marching bands, town councils, picnics, church socials and murderous robots.

However, there is a twist. With shock and stunned amazement, Johnson realizes the awful truth: Underground men are all sterile, and he has been selected for stud service—a process accomplished while rudely strapped to a coldly unsympathetic artificial insemination machine. Luckily, the girl saves him from this terrible servitude and together they fight their way to the surface, where they discover Blood dying from starvation.

It is a poignant juncture: Johnson must decide between the girl or his starving friend, Blood. But alas, it is a males' world and the girl loses out, becoming high-grade protein and carbohydrate for the grateful dog. Much refreshed, the Boy and his Dog set out once again for the far horizon in search of new adventures and, it is hoped, new moral suasions.

Shocking and always controversial, *A Boy and His Dog* is Don Johnson's most convincing and powerful film portrayal to date. His presence and very real cinematic charisma make him a personality to be reckoned with in American film. For his performance Don Johnson won the Best Actor Award from the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Films, an Award he accepted on January 31 at the 3rd Annual Golden Scroll Awards Ceremony in Hollywood.

—Dr. Donald Reed and Grant Jones

FILM DISTRIBUTION: SEEING GOOD FILMS IN THE U.S.

by Mark Purcell

The Golden Age for movie-shopping in this country was the decade 10-20 years ago: when the art-films provided a whole alternative British-European choice of product to the older established chains; and when the Late Show, not yet permitted free access to recent Hollywood releases, limped along with Astaire, Gable, Capra and John Ford. Distributio choice is now however narrowed so drastically that it's worth reviewing the *extra*-theater outlets likely to exist in our neighborhoods. Many (most?) of the films reviewed in magazine coluns like this one, only reach the intended consumer today via film societies or the libraries' audio-visual circuit.

FILM SOCIETIES/SOME NOTES. If you have even 2-3 must-see movies that won't be coming to your local theater or TV network, it's a healthy learning experience to run

your own one-shot one-season film society. Use the catalogues and 16mm reference guide of the best A-V service within driving distance. By contrast with theater-choice contraction, the expansion of rental and museum-print sources has in fact made this the Golden Age of the rental source. I opened and ran two such one-shot operations, without then being able to thread a projector.

Excellent films are shown regularly around us without the print-owners and film-society operators bothering to let us know, even when we would pay to see the particular film. I describe the local film situation in a mid-sized Midwestern city (Peoria), by no means hip or fanatic about the art of the motion picture: simply to encourage the reader's own exploratory instincts.

Our regular local series are run (1) as a money-making project by the local stage stock company; and (2) by a high-school English teacher across the river. Also, this one season, two full programs are available on the local university (Bradley) campus: (1) as part of a literature-film class on the Western; and (2) as an introduction to the modern Establishment experimental-film (Mekas, Snow). Out of town, an hour's drive away, one man runs a Wednesday series for his history-of-film class; and, with some of the same titles, a regular Sunday society program. Two hours away is a Big 10 campus at Urbana (3 hours, Iowa City; 5 hours, Madison) with all the various choices that implies.

My point is, none of the local operators advertise properly; many are reluctant to bother with even the cheapest advance-schedule mailing list. This seems a generic disease. For years (perhaps even now) a Chicago newspaper-advt. man ran a marvelous series at Roosevelt U., Chicago (3 hours). But he wouldn't advertise! At the 1969 Worldcon in St. Louis, the boy instructed to set up the evening film series refused to run advance schedules; I called him two separate afternoons unsuccessfully about this, and I missed seeing the 1929 Fritz Lang *Lady in the Moon* because of this mysterious, generic operator's disease.

Society operators tend to have extremely strong prejudices and assumptions, which are probably their emotional stimuli for doing volunteer work. The filmgoers' trick is to match up all their prejudices: to use our high-school instructor's partiality for early sound to catch the oldest Katherine Hepburns; the ISU man's bias for big-name directors to see the rare Renoir-Bergman films that he books; and sf cons for fantasy. But you need to beg these men to get their schedules or location; you can of course usually assume they're using some institution's projection facilities.

THE AUDIO-VISUAL LIBRARY. The days when the local library only booked a few travelogs for the geriatric set, are long gone. In the state of Illinois at least, films are now purchased for an area-chain service blanketing the state. Regional area collections properly reflect its relative cinematic sophistication; so that (in my opinion) there is perhaps a higher percentage of interesting film in the catalogues servicing Chicago or the Urbana-Champaign academic area. But every big catalogue now seems to include Martha Graham, Norman MacLaren, the Hubley cartoons, Robert Flaherty and some of the good new documentaries. Interlibrary service covers every catalogue in the state, as long as the request has an institutional pretext.

Even more excitingly, a range of good film material that (as a whole) is outside the library's budget, comes in on a preview basis. Here in Peoria, I sometimes sit in to catch something promising (which, remember, the library may not be able to buy and make available later). My only chore is to fill out a *vox populi* card; the librarians are spending our tax money and their buying choices are strongly controlled by what they project of future demand and interest in a print. If you are personally interested in what's going on (especially in documentary and animation) in the movie field, indicate your interest to the local library. Post-film discussions, by the way, are an invaluable way to sound out the cinematic sophistication of your area.



Steve Stiles

Paul Walker: In A Critical Condition

IMPERIAL EARTH, by Arthur C. Clarke. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976. 303 pp. \$7.95

Imperial Earth by Arthur C. Clarke is a satisfying, sometimes fascinating, consistently intelligent and human book that is an absolute *must* for hard sf buffs like myself. And now that that is over with, let me tell you what I really think—

The word "vision" is a much-used noun and it will be applied to *Imperial Earth*. One could argue that what distinguishes it from the majority of other sf novels, and from Clarke's other works in general, is that here vision occupies the place of plot. There is almost no plot in the familiar sense—nothing "happens," there is no villain, no duel against alien adversaries, no aliens at all in fact. A young man who has lived all his life on Titan, Duncan Mackenzie, and is heir to its seat of government, is sent to Earth to make a speech to the Quincentennial celebration. He prepares for the trip, he makes the trip, he sightsees, he goes home. There is a conspiracy of sorts involving an old friend who may be a smuggler; there is a violent death; there is a profoundly personal climax in which Duncan revises his family's scenario for the future of Titan, and mankind. But "nothing" that we are accustomed to thinking of as "something" in an sf novel "happens." What does happen is that Duncan remembers his childhood, his first fateful game of "polyominos" taught to him by his grandmother, his first love with a beautiful Earthgirl named Calindy who gave her love to his best friend, Karl, his preparation for the experience of Earth's terribly gravity, his journey across space in which he sees the secret of the Asymptotic Drive for himself, his landing on the Mother World, his grueling ordeal of making a speech before the Daughters of the Revolution and so on and on. Each experience seemingly a separate episode in itself but each a piece of the picture of a future Earth that extends beyond Saturn, a picture that we see through Duncan's eyes, that convinces us that we are at his side from day to day, feeling his awe and wonder, his pleasure and disappointment, his fear and uncertainty at every new experience. And it is these experiences in themselves, and in their cumulative impact, in coming to grasp the scope of Clarke's portrait that the fascination of the book lies.

But "vision" is an inaccurate word. It implies a concept born whole and spontaneous in the writer's imagination, and concepts rarely come that way. Rather they are made, built up, out of bits and pieces, one of which the writer instinctively seized upon as the germ of an interesting whole. And if he is a good writer, then whatever bits and pieces he chooses from however long ago will be infused with personal feelings. A good writer cares deeply, intimately, about the details of his story. And a good reader can sense the caring that went into their selection. Clarke is a good writer, not a great one, but one in whose works the details read, stand out, shine, like very personal dreams. He is in love with *things*, the sight of them, the touch, the workings, the very existence of them.

Imperial Earth might be looked at as a collection of Clarke's scientific musings and enthusiasms from the past X number of years. The book was first suggested to an editor in the early 50's and has been in the back of Clarke's mind ever since. Some of the musings and enthusiasms have appeared in previous books, most prominently his persistent belief that the next great step in human evolution will come through contact with alien civilizations. But for the most part the book is made of scraps from what he has seen, read, or been told, and he admits this in his acknowledgements, but he has done a really fine job of patching them together into a coherent, credible picture.

The first half to two-thirds of it does read alarmingly like a Heinlein juvenile, not so aggressively so smugly speculative, nor so belligerently ideological, but then Clarke is an Englishman, and a man of the world. The Mackenzies of Titan would fit prestigiously into any Heinlein society, but Heinlein would never permit his hero to put them in their place as Duncan does in the end. Duncan is a friendly, humbler, less American-Go-Getterish hero than can be found in Heinlein, but like Heinlein's characters, regardless of their age, it is hard to see him as anything but a boy. He has no depth, no discontent, no complexity of feelings that can be taken seriously. He is totally occupied, as are Clarke's future societies of both Titan and Earth, with the surface of things. He is admittedly ignorant of culture. Titan,

although poets and artists are mentioned, has no culture. Earth is likewise a spiritual wasteland wholly absorbed in *things* for their own sake. Even the destiny of man—and what Clarke novel would be complete without a scenario for the destiny of man—is the achievement of yet another *thing*. Clarke's idea of mankind, his "vision" of the future, of destiny, his mysticism, is ankle-deep. His expedition to Utopia, to the apotheosis of the species, is really a kind of wading out at low-tide to waves which break gently against one's legs creating the short-lived illusion that one can resist the whole sea. And history is a sea which the technology alone can never hope to withstand.

Imperial Earth suggests Clarke believes it can. That the solution to all problems lies in things, better things for better living. Maybe they do. I am not a Luddite. But I could understand some critics really despising a book like this: the machine-worship within, not Clarke. What redeems him from the less likeable Heinleinism of other technologists is his obvious boyish love of his material. It is not so different from that of the idyllic nature-lover who finds peace in the mixed serenity and brutality of the wilderness, only Clarke's wilderness is outer space, the possibilities of mathematics and science. One cannot be too critical of a man who loves his work without betraying a little envy.

Imperial Earth seems to me the most personal of Clarke's novels, and it is irresistible to view certain episodes as autobiographical. Did Clarke ever give a speech to the Daughters of the American Revolution? Is Duncan's grandmother a relation of Clarke's? He does admit that the scene in which Duncan seafares for the first time and destroys the *Diadema* happened to him. How many more encounters are facsimiles of his own experiences? And the book seems to me, in one respect, Clarke's "little joke," filled with topical satire which does not detract from the narrative, and perhaps a trace of self-satire. Previously, Clarke has had his Earth heroes adventuring out into space to encounter alien worlds; in *Imperial Earth*, he has an "alien," a Titanian, adventuring to Earth for self-discovery; it is Earth that is seen as the alien world.

The book's medium is time. We are given the far future as the present; that is, the future is *presented* to us on a convincing day-to-day basis as Duncan lives it. He goes to Earth for a Centennial celebration, an earth-obsessed with preserving the past—our past. He pays a fascinating visit to the old *Titanic* which has been resurrected from its icy grave. And this becomes a symbol of the future. From his experience of Earth's past he sees the way to the future. This is very skillfully done, Clarke is a fine craftsman and a competent writer, and it demonstrates the lesson sf has to teach us all: past, present, and future time actively exist simultaneously at any moment in history. Sf, like history, encourages us to view *all* three in proportion, for to succumb to one is to be at the mercy of the others. We are time travellers, every moment moving backward, here and now, going forward. We may mistake one state for the more real condition of man, but all are just as real, just as inescapable.

THE EMBEDDING, by Ian Watson. Scribner's, 1975, c1973. 254 pp. \$6.95

Like *Imperial Earth*, *The Embedding* by Ian Watson comes from an Englishman. Unlike Clarke, however, Watson is not fond of America or Americans. *The Embedding* is a first novel. Watson was born in England in 1943 and graduated from Oxford with "a First in English" (whatever that is), has done research in comparative literature, has taught in universities in Africa and Japan, and his novel comes to our shores with eulogistic reviews from British critics who called it "spectacular," "brilliant . . . astonishing," "sophisticated . . . confident . . . striking . . . what science fiction will be like in ten years." I found it unreadable—although, God knows, I tried.

There are two, or three, or four or five plot lines in the novel, but for convenience let's say there are two central related situations that run a parallel course until a third is raised in the middle of the book and all are resolved into a single situation that really isn't a plot at all. The first concerns a linguist named Chris Sole who is part of a team conducting an experiment with mentally defective and normal, but orphan, children to detect the roots of Universal Grammar (see Chomsky). I couldn't understand much of it, not even the definition of "embedding." Watson is clear about everything but the central thesis of his novel, that is narrated in quick, cryptic, philosophical glimpses.

Then there is a Frenchman named Pierre who has gone deep into the Amazon to live

with a very primitive tribe called the Xenahoa who are about to be drowned by the rising waters of the Amazon. The Brazilian military regime and us American capitalist pigs are building a dam which will consume thousands of miles of jungle and the Xenahoa. Pierre is trying to understand the natives, to become one of them, so some record of their unique existence will be left. To do this he must learn two languages: the everyday language of the tribe, and the special, "embedded" language which reveals their most personal view of their jungle universe.

Finally, there is the arrival of the aliens, the Sp'thra, who have come to trade space travel technology in return for disembodied human brains with which they can study our cerebral language patterns. And it was at this point my interest collapsed in exhaustion. Did the mystic Xenahoa and/or the embedded language of the children of Dr. Sole satisfy the needs of the Sp'thra and gain for man the key to star travel? I don't know. I don't even give a damn. I left the book after repeatedly frustrated attempts to finish it, feeling intellectually battered.

Watson is very bright. He knows *everything*. And there is too much of everything in *The Embedding*, and not much of it is clear. The characters, except for Pierre, are repulsive. There is no cumulative suspense. I was never sure what Dr. Sole's experiment was supposed to prove and Watson never paid it the attention it deserved. Pierre's experiences were more vivid and human, but again, Watson gives us no more than a glimpse at them before he goes back to Sole or on to something else. What is it all about? I kept asking.

The Embedding is a novel of ideas, too many ideas, very knowledgeably discussed, but uninterestingly presented and not startlingly original. Any one of Watson's plotlines might have made a good book in itself—he can write, although he has an irritating fondness for short, choppy sentences and terse descriptions—but all together they present the reader with a bewildering array of images and ideas rather than a coherent argument.

But don't let my exasperation dissuade serious students of the genre from sampling *The Embedding*. There may be some who will find the book worthwhile. It is certainly the most ambitious and complex first novel I have ever read by an sf writer, and my displeasure with it will not deter me from trying Watson's next one.

THE WIND'S TWELVE QUARTERS, by Ursula K. Le Guin. Harper and Row, 1975. 303 pp. \$8.95

THE BEST OF ISAAC ASIMOV. Fawcett Q2694, 1976, c1973. 319 pp. \$1.50

Of her first collection, containing seventeen stories from 1964 to 1974, Ursula K. Le Guin says, "it gives a roughly chronological survey during the first ten years after I broke into print, belated but undaunted, at the age of thirty-two. They appear here very roughly in the order in which they were written, so that the development of the artist may become part of the interest of the book." As indeed it is.

There are three Le Guin's. The first is the poet, the romantic, the Sorbonne student of Renaissance literature who aspired to be like the classic fantasists, the Le Guin of *Rocannon's World* and *Planet of Exile*, here represented by "Semley's Necklace," "April in Paris," and "The Rule of Names" among others. Then there is the less derivative, more cerebral, philosophic Le Guin of *Lathe of Heaven* and *The Dispossessed*, represented by "Nine Lives," "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow," and "The Ones Who Walked Away from Omelas." And then there is the woman, the "person" (if you prefer), the wife and mother, the indefinable quantity called "human" represented in her letters and here in her prefaces. Witty, whimsical, sharp-tongued, diffident, warm, unpretentious, defensive, straightforward, but not blunt, and never impolite. As one of her reviewers put it, "she writes as a realized person, an integrated personality." But she never seems to write that way in any one story all at the same time.

I was partial to the romantic Le Guin; suspicious, even hostile, to the intellectual; but my interest was revived by the latter's charm. Le Guin's career shows a personal and professional progress that has been inward as well as upward. Her craft, especially as a novelist, has matured so that now she is the best novelist in sf. Her short stories were excellent to begin with. But she has progressed away from the early romantic, not by

rejecting her, but by transmogrifying into the more cerebral, the more scientific, the more ideological and philosophical Le Guin that we know today. The romantic remains, the world maker, the saga singer, the epic visionary as a domesticated sister, more refined, more subdued now. Her poetry whispers under the breath of her prose which has been given a veneer of realism.

What of the third Le Guin? Like the other two, she is everywhere, always, but the least visible. She is Le Guin's problem; the flaw in her character, the obstruction to her achieving that final stage of mastery that would make her a first-rate novelist by any standards. The third Le Guin is a sentimentalist, a conservative, an optimist, and even worse an idealist, which is to say again she is a sentimentalist. She insists on depicting the world as she would have it be rather than as it is. Likewise, her characters are saints and devils or mere functions in the narrative. She resists the perception of evil. She disputes the omnipotence of irrationality. She defies the divinity of the absurd. But she knows better (witness the "ambiguity" of her utopia in *The Dispossessed*.)

If she did not know better, she could get away with it and still achieve a real artistic and personal integration, but knowing better, she struggles with herself, her material, to tell the truth and the struggle subverts her art. The reader is left uncertain if she really believes what she is saying or just wants to believe it. But the struggle goes on, and it is impossible for me to believe that *The Dispossessed* is her final stage of development. There is still the raw material of that third Le Guin to be transmogrified into a whole, integrated Le Guin: poet, intellectual, person. Meanwhile, she has left us artifacts of her past. *The Wind's Twelve Quarters* is one of the most interesting, most readable, most accomplished collections of short stories ever assembled.

The same may be said verbatim for *The Best of Isaac Asimov*, except that it is no retrospective, it is not even a definitive collection of the best of the Good Doctor, but merely another approximation of it. Asimov's opinion of what is the best, which will be disputed by long-time fans of his work. Where is the "Ugly Little Boy" for instance? The collection includes "Marooned Off Venus" from a 1939 *Amazing*, "Nightfall," ho-hum, "C-Chute," "The Martian Way," a grand story, "The Fun They Had," a story with which everyone has fun, "The Dead Past," my own favorite, and "The Billiard Ball," which is ingenious and memorable, among others. How easy it is to forget how good Isaac Asimov has always been throughout the forty-odd years of his career. His work has been uneven—whose hasn't?—but how many writers have hit that high mark so often? And sustained it for so long?

To those of you who have neglected the work of Asimov, let the *Best* serve as an introduction, and with my assurance, go on to *Earth Is Room Enough*, *Nine Tomorrows*, *Caves of Steel*, *The Naked Sun*, *The End of Eternity*, and then to all the rest.

THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL, by Ira Levin. Random House, 1976. 280 pp. \$8.95

As a creative writing major in a class of one, my mentor's magic word was "professionalism." And by that he did not mean "art" or "hack-work," both of which he mistrusted, but the craft of writing, the view of a book or story as a fine piece of machinery produced with patience to make a profit. One of the examples he most admired was Ira Levin's *A Kiss Before Dying*.

Levin is a professional in the highest sense of the term, his books like clockworks, not "plotted" in the conventional sense in which a writer pours new wine into old bottles, but crafted, pieced-together patiently, and requiring patience on the part of the reader who must himself re-piece the narrative together in his imagination. Such patience usually results in some boredom: but never in Levin. His books are simultaneously immediately and cumulatively exciting. How he does it—God, I wish I knew.

I could not put down *The Boys From Brazil* until I had finished it. It was no test of endurance, I had no sense of the passage of time, one minute I was on page five and the next I was done, grinning with satisfaction. What is it about? I'm not going to tell you. If you've ever read a Levin novel you know that learning what it is all about is the whole fun of reading the book, and before you get to the middle you'll resent ever having read even the

blurb. But you will read the blurb, the ads, I suppose, so I will tell you it is about Nazis, a diabolical plot, and a Nazi hunter who tries to thwart it. I know, I know, you've read so many books about Nazis and diabolical plots, but none quite like this one.

The Boys From Brazil is not *A Kiss Before Dying* or *Rosemary's Baby* but it is more substantial than *Stepford Wives* and more interesting than *This Perfect Day*. Levin's science fiction gimmick will be familiar to sf fans, his diabolical plot is absurd, and his characters aren't really believable, either. His prose is less polished, more hurried than in his better books, and there is one instance of action at the end which seems to be completely unmotivated. But these are afterthoughts. *The Boys From Brazil* is a thriller.

DOES ANYONE ELSE HAVE SOMETHING FURTHER TO ADD? by R.A. Lafferty. Scribner's, 1974. 273 pp. \$6.95

R.A. Lafferty is one of the best short story writers in America, which means he is one of the best writers in the world. His work will live to delight future generations. You can quote me. I have only made such an opulent claim for one other sf writer and that was Ray Bradbury. He, too, will live, but Lafferty is the better writer. He is a poet, his stories poems. What is my definition of poetry, then? It's words that aspire to music. Not all that is cast in the poetic mould is poetry. For poetry to be the work must contain a transcendental element; elusive, inexplicable, but whose content ameliorates the whole to the level of itself. The element is not necessarily intellectual, philosophic, mystic, introspective. It just is a quality, a something, an echo of the soul. Lafferty writes mostly prose, but mostly all the prose he writes contains that element essential to poetry, to music, that liberating, consciousness-raising quality that allows us to perceive our own spiritual dimension.

Big words, I know. Is Lafferty a Beethoven? A Whitman? No, he is a yarn-spinner, a leg-puller, a teller of tall tales. Some of his stories are just plain jokes or anecdotes or spleen-ventings against academics or the times themselves. He believes in God, and he who believes in God believes in the Devil, in angels and demons, in the eternal struggle of good and evil, and he who believes in all that believes in magic, in the existence of a super-preter-natural stratum of reality. *Look*, he tells us time and again, *see* for yourself how bizarre and grotesque and wondrous and mythic is the state of the world. Learn to see it as it is because thinking about it will only confuse you. And that's the trouble with the world, people have got everything mixed up. The only reliable rationality is faith.

I make Lafferty sound like a preacher, but he never preaches. He rarely says what he means straightforwardly if he can say it backwards. He is not trying to teach us anything, he is just showing us what he sees himself, but as few people see the way Lafferty does, the mind, the insight behind the surrealistic humor is invisible. But it can be sensed, it is sensed by those who enjoy him even if it is not understood. In fact, it can't be understood verbally, translated verbatim and sustain its essence. Like music, it is elusive, inexplicable.

Do you get the impression that I liked Lafferty's new collection of seventeen stories? *Does Anyone Else Have Something Further to Add?* is subtitled "Stories about Secret Places and Mean Men." The stories are from 1961 to 1974, and the package Scribner's has provided them is very handsome, although I object to their scanty acknowledgements. I like to know where all the stories appeared and when. As I said, there are seventeen stories of which I thoroughly enjoyed seventeen.

RECENT RECORDINGS

Cosmic Truth, by The Undisputed Truth. Gordy
Kryptonite, by Neil Merryweather. Mercury
SRM-1-1024
More, by Pink Floyd. Harvest SW-11198
The Myths and Legends of King Arthur and the
Knights of the Round Table, by Rick
Wakeman. A&M SP-4515
The New Worlds Fair, by Michael Moorcock & The
Deep Fix. United Artists UAG 29732
Phantom of the Paradise (original soundtrack

recording) A&M SP-3653
Radioactivity, by Kraftwerk. Capitol
Rubycon, by Tangerine Dream. Virgin Records
VR 13-116
Sadistic Mika Band. Harvest
Son of Dracula (soundtrack) Apple ABL 1-0220
Warrior on the Edge of Time, by Hawkwind.
Atco
Wish You Were Here, by Pink Floyd. Columbia PC
33453

New Books

HARDCOVERS

- Andersen, Hans Christian. **THE FAIRY TALE OF MY LIFE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY** (tr. of Mit livs eventyr, repr of 1868 ed) Paddington Press/Two Continents, 1975. \$10.95
- THE TRUE STORY OF MY LIFE** (tr. of Mit livs eventyr, repr of 1926 ed) Gale Research. \$12.50
- Anderson, Poul. **THE WINTER OF THE WORLD**. SF Book Club, Jan. \$1.98
- Anthony, Piers. **OX**. SF Book Club, Feb. \$1.98
- Bayley, Barrington J. **THE GARMENTS OF CAEAN**. Doubleday, Feb. \$5.95
- Beresford, John D. **THE HAMPSHIRE WONDER** (repr of 1911 ed) Garland, 1975. \$11.00
- Bergonzi, Bernard, ed. **H. G. WELLS: A COLLECTION OF CRITICAL ESSAYS**. Spectrum Books, Jan. \$9.95
- Capek, Karel. **THE ABSOLUTE AT LARGE** (repr of 1927 ed) Garland, 1975. \$11.00
- Church, Richard. **MARY SHELLEY** (repr of 1928 ed) Norwood Editions, 1975. \$15.00
- Dake, Charles Romyn. **A STRANGE DISCOVERY** (repr of 1899 ed) Gregg Press, 1975. \$14.00
- Dann, Jack & George Zebrowski, eds. **FASTER THAN LIGHT**. Harper, Feb. \$8.95
- Deal, Babs H. **WAITING TO HEAR FROM WILLIAM** (marg supernat) Doubleday, 1975. \$5.95
- De Felitta, Frank. **AUDREY ROSE** (marg supernat) Putnam, Dec. \$8.95
- Del Rey, Lester, ed. **BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES OF THE YEAR 4**. Dutton, 1975. \$8.95
- Drake, Walter Raymond. **GODS AND SPACEMEN THROUGHOUT HISTORY** (nf) Regnery, 1975. \$9.95
- Fisher, John. **THE ALICE IN WONDERLAND COOKBOOK**. Clarkson N. Potter, Feb. \$6.95
- Florescu, Radu. **IN SEARCH OF FRANKENSTEIN** (nf) New York Graphic Society, 1975. \$9.95
- Glenn, Lois. **CHARLES W.S. WILLIAMS: A CHECKLIST** (Serif series 33) Kent State Univ. Press, Feb. \$7.50
- Harrison, Harry & Brian W. Aldiss, eds. **BEST SF: 1974**. Bobbs, Dec. \$8.95
- King, Stephen. **SALEM'S LOT** (supernat) Doubleday, 1975. \$7.95
- Knight, Damon, ed. **SCIENCE FICTION OF THE THIRTIES** (repr) SF Book Club, Jan. \$3.50
- Kuttner, Henry. **DESTINATION INFINITY** (repr of 1947 ed) Garland, 1975. \$11.00
- McKenney, Kenneth. **THE PLANTS**. Berkley/Putnam, Feb. \$7.95
- Manlove, Colin Nicholas. **MODERN FANTASY: FIVE STUDIES** (repr Brit) Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975. \$18.95

- Paley, Alan L. **EDGAR ALLAN POE, AMERICAN POET AND MYSTERY WRITER**. SamHar Press, 1975. \$2.29
- Peppin Brigid. **FANTASY: MASTERS OF LATE VICTORIAN BOOK ILLUSTRATION**. Watson Guptill, 1975. \$25.00
- Poe, Edgar Allan. **THE SHORT FICTION OF EDGAR ALLAN POE: AN ANNOTATED EDITION**. Ed. by Stuart & Susan Levine. Bobbs-Merrill, Sept. \$10.95
- Pohl, Frederik. **THE EARLY POHL** (coll) Doubleday, Feb. \$5.95
- Ransome, Arthur. **EDGAR ALLAN POE: A CRITICAL STUDY** (repr of 1910 ed) Norwood Editions, 1975. \$25.00
- Silverberg, Robert & Roger Elwood, eds. **EPOCH** (repr) SF Book Club, Feb. \$3.98
- Stapledon, Olaf. **ODD JOHN** (repr of 1965 ed) Garland, 1975. \$11.00
- Van Vogt, A.E. **THE BOOK OF PTATH** (repr of 1947 ed) Garland, 1975. \$11.00
- Wilhelm, Kate. **THE CLEWISTON TEST** (marg) Farrar, Feb. \$8.95
- Williamson, Jack. **THE POWER OF BLACKNESS**. Berkley/Putnam, Jan. \$6.95

PAPERBACKS

- Aldiss, Brian W. **THE EIGHTY MINUTE HOUR: A SPACE OPERA** (repr) Leisure 237ZK, 1975. \$1.25
- Allen, L. David. **HERBERT'S DUNE AND OTHER WORKS: NOTES...** Cliffs Notes, 1975. \$1.50
- Anderson, Poul. **THERE WILL BE TIME**. Signet Y6925, Jan. \$1.25
- Asimov, Isaac. **TWENTIETH CENTURY DISCOVERY** (nf, rev & updated) Ace 83226, Feb. \$1.50
- Bergonzi, Bernard, ed. **H.G. WELLS: A COLLECTION OF CRITICAL ESSAYS**. Spectrum, Jan. \$2.95
- Brand, Kurt. **PERRY RHODAN 89: Power's Price**. Ace 66073, Feb. \$1.25
- Carr, Terry, ed. **UNIVERSE 5** (repr) Popular 00353, Feb. \$1.25
- Carter, Lin. **THE VALLEY WHERE TIME STOOD STILL** (repr) Popular 00344, Feb. \$1.25
- Charbonneau, Louis. **EMBRYO** (marg, based on screenplay) Warner 86-004, Feb. \$1.25
- Chilson, Robert. **THE SHORES OF KANSAS**. Popular Library 00358, Feb. \$1.25
- Delany, Samuel R. **TRITON**. Bantam Y2567, Feb. \$1.95
- Ellison, Harlan. **APPROACHING OBLIVION** (coll, repr) Signet Y6848, Jan. \$1.25
- Elwood, Roger, ed. **CONTINUUM 3** (repr) Berkley, 1975. 95¢
- Engl, M.J. **ARSLAN**. Warner 86-104, Feb. \$1.25

Farren, Nick. **THE TEXTS OF FESTIVAL**. Avon 27011, Nov. \$1.25

Fox, Gardner F. **KYRIK FIGHTS THE DEMON WORLD (s&s)** Leisure LB284NK, 1975. 95¢

Gardner, John. **THE KING'S INDIAN: STORIES AND TALES (repr)** Ballantine 24806, Feb. \$2.25

Gouliart, Ron. **THE ENORMOUS HOURGLASS**. Award AQ1510. \$1.25

James, Laurence. **RACK 4: Planet of the Blind**. Pinnacle 220675, July. \$1.25

Larkin, David, ed. **WORLDS OF FANTASY CALENDAR 1976**. Peacock M1008, 1975. \$4.95

Lord, Jeffrey. **RICHARD BLADE 15: The Towers of Melnon (s&s)** Pinnacle 220688, Aug. \$1.25

RICHARD BLADE 16: The Crystal Seas. Pinnacle, 1975. \$1.25

Lupoff, Richard. **THE CRACK IN THE SKY**. Dell 5419, Feb. \$1.25

McIntyre, Vonda N. **THE EXILE WAITING**. Fawcett Gold Medal P3456, Feb. \$1.25

Martin, George R.R. **A SONG FOR LYA AND OTHER STORIES**. Avon 27581, Feb. \$1.25

Matheson, Richard. **BID TIME RETURN (supernat, repr)** Ballantine 24810, Feb. \$1.75

Millhiser, Marlys. **NELLA WATTS (supernat, repr)** Fawcett Crest Q2655, Dec. \$1.50

Norton, Andre. **IRON CAGE (repr)** Ace 37290, Feb. \$1.50

Orwell, George. 1984 (reissue) NAL CY688, Jan. \$1.25

Paley, Alan L. **EDGAR ALLAN POE, AMERICAN POET AND MYSTERY WRITER**. SamHar Press, 1975. 98¢

Reynolds, Mack. **SECTION G: UNITED PLANETS**. Ace 75860, Feb. \$1.25

Rogers, Michael. **MINDFOGGER (repr)** Dell 4895, Feb. \$1.25

Scheer, K.H. **PERRY RHODAN 88: The Mystery of the Anti**. Ace 66072, Feb. \$1.25

Silverberg, Robert. **THE BEST OF ROBERT SILVERBERG (coll)** Pocket 80282, Feb. \$1.95

Spinrad, Norman. **THE SOLARIANS (repr)** Leisure LB327ZK, Jan. \$1.25

Torro, Pel. **GALAXY 666 (repr)** Leisure LB259NK, 1975. 95¢

Tubb, E.C. **COLLISION COURSE (Space:1999, repr Brit)** Pocket 80274, Feb. \$1.50

Van Vogt, A.E. **MASTERS OF TIME (repr)** Manor Books 95417, 1975. 95¢

THE VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE (repr) Manor Books 12345, Jan. \$1.25

JUVENILES

Beck, Robert E., ed. **LITERATURE OF THE SUPERNATURAL (juv, abr. ed)** Lothrop Lee, 1975. \$5.50

Beckman, Thea. **CRUSADE IN JEANS (fty)** Scribner. \$8.95

Bellairs, John. **THE HOUSE WITH A CLOCK IN**

ITS WALLS (fty, 2 ptg) Dell Yearling 03742, 1975. \$1.25. Age 9-12

Benford, Gregory. **JUPITER PROJECT**. Nelson, Nov. \$6.95

Bova, Ben. **THROUGH EYES OF WONDER: SCIENCE FICTION AND SCIENCE**. Addisonian Press, 1975. \$5.75. Age 11 up

Bunting, Eve. **THE DAY OF THE DINOSAURS (fty, The dinosaur machines series)** EMC Corp, 1975. \$3.95, \$1.95paper

de Regniers, Beatrice Schenk. **LITTLE SISTER AND THE MONTH BROTHERS (Russian fairy tale)** Seabury, 1975. \$5.95

Dragt, Tonke. **THE TOWERS OF FEBRUARY (fty, tr. from Dutch)** Morrow, 1975. \$5.95

Edelson, Edward. **GREAT SCIENCE FICTION FROM THE MOVIES (repr, orig: Visions of tomorrow)** Archway 29749, Feb. \$1.25

Elwood, Roger, ed. **TOMORROW: NEW WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION**. M. Evans, 1975. \$5.95

Erwin, Betty K. **WHO IS VICTORIA? (fty, repr)** Archway 29752, Jan. \$1.25

Hunter, Norman. **PROFESSOR BRANESTAWM (boxed set, repr)** Penguin Puffin GP320, Fall. \$6.95paper

Jameson, Cynthia. **THE CLAY POT BOY (fty, repr)** Dell Yearling 04450, 1975. 75¢

Kahl, Virginia. **GUNHILDE AND THE HAL-LOWEEN SPELL (fty)** Scribner, 1975. \$5.95

Key, Alexander. **THE MAGIC MEADOW (fty)** Westminster, 1975. \$5.50. Age 10-14

Littledale, Freya. **THE ELVES AND THE SHOE-MAKER (fty)** Four Winds, 1975. \$4.95

Mahy, Margaret. **THE BOY WHO WAS FOL-LOWED HOME (fty)** Watts, 1975. \$3.95, \$5.90lib bdg. Age 5-8

Newman, Robert. **THE SHATTERED STONE (fty)** Atheneum, 1975. \$6.95

Norton, Mary. **BED-KNOB AND BROOMSTICK (fty, repr)** Harcourt Voyager AVB91, 1975. \$1.65paper. Age 8-12

Oldenburg, E. William. **POTAWATOMI INDIAN SUMMER (fty)** Eerdman, Aug. \$5.95

Williams, Jay. **DANNY DUNN, INVISIBLE BOY (repr)** Archway 29733, Sept. \$1.25

— & Raymond Abrashkin. **DANNY DUNN, SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE**. McGraw-Hill, 1975. \$5.95

Yolen, Jane. **GREYLING: A PICTURE STORY FROM THE ISLANDS OF SHETLAND (fty, repr)** Collins + World, 1975. \$4.91



Steve Stiles

Lilliputia

THE IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE: A HISTORY NATURAL AND UNNATURAL OF BEINGS TERRIBLE AND WONDERFUL, by Georgess HcHargue. Dell Yearling, 1974. 95¢. Illus. by Frank Bozzo. Age level: 10 and up (hardcover: Holt, 1972. \$6.95)

The "up" in "10 and up" is meant quite literally, as the bibliography includes such thoroughly adult authors as Joseph Campbell, Sir James Frazer, and Montague Summers. Curiously, in a book devoted to mythological and legendary beings, the beloved Bullfinch's *Mythology* of my childhood is not included.

This is a well written detailed, survey of various types of strange beings from various folk cultures, the classical epic, etc. The author goes beyond summary and brings in contemporary analysis of the origins of these tales and myths. She is also quite straightforward about sexual elements which many children's books would bypass (a very succinct, no nonsense account of a witch's sabbath). There are a few points where the book seems obviously written for children, but I think that most adults would enjoy the book. Also, the author skips all over the world so that there is a good bit of unfamiliar material.

—Leslie Bloom

GREENWITCH, by Susan Cooper. Atheneum, 1974. 147 pp. \$5.50. Age level: 9-12

The golden Trewissick Grail is stolen from the British Museum. Simon, Jane and Barney Drew, who had originally found the grail in the South Cornwall village, return to Trewissick to help recover the grail on behalf of the Light, positive forces in conflict with the evil Dark.

This is the third book in a five-novel series called "The Dark Is Rising," which is also the title of the second book. The first book is *Over Sea, Under Stone*.

Greenwitch is a transitional book, barely complete in itself. It presents characters already developed in the earlier books: the three named above, then Great Uncle Merriman, a friend of his named Captain Toms, and a boy new to the three Drews but who from references in this book must have been prominent in one of the earlier adventures: a boy named Will. The last three named are Old Ones, people of greater powers than mortal humanity, involved in a universal struggle.

The price of the book(s) make them unlikely subjects for a child's (young adult's) private library, although if you have a favorite nephew/niece/grandchild, etc. the first three books would make a lovely Christmas gift, and let the youngster's parents fork over for the final two books. . . .

This is an excellent series, intelligently written with enough assorted Anglo-Saxon mythology to please all. I shall visit the library to catch the first two of this delightful series.

—Gail C. Futoran

THE MUSHROOM CENTER DISASTER, by N. M. Bodecker. Illus. by Erik Blegvard. Atheneum, 1974. \$4.25. Age level: 4-8

Mr. Beetle rents a mushroom and is very happy and contented in his new home until the disaster strikes—the remains of a picnic blanket the area and destroy its beauty. The following day the inhabitants set up an emergency plan to deal with the garbage, and they and all their friends begin to work. Mr. Beetle devises a plan to use the tins and straws and is elected mayor. Slowly, mushroom center returns to its former beauty and its inhabitants are happy as winter comes, but in the back of one's mind is always the question of what will happen next picnic time. Will people be careless and ruin the beauty of the land again?

I highly recommend this book. It radiates a quiet charm and has such a hypnotic beauty in it, it was hard to put down. The writer includes many details that add to the enjoyment of the story and make you empathize with the characters. The gentle teaching of the use of re-cycling and about ecology is commendable. The pen and ink sketches add to the beauty of this book. Both the author and the illustrator did a great job and are to be commended for their work.

—Sandra Deckinger

DAUGHTER OF NIGHT: A TALE OF THREE WORLDS, by Lydia Obukhova. Translated by Mirra Ginsburg. Macmillan, 1974. 161 pp. \$5.95

It is interesting to note that the original title of this novel was *Lilit*, which makes a great deal more sense than the one it carries now. Oh no, you say, not another Adam-and-Eve ending, with the predictable alien influence thrown in. Yes, say I—and No. First of all, this is Lilith, Adam's legendary first wife, who was very unpopular because of her upstart ways, not that insipid Eve. Second, "Odam" disobeys an already existing tribal taboo by running off with Lilith, who is by far the brightest, most imaginative woman in the tribe. (What she saw in him, I'll never know, but that's biology.) Third, the alien is not a God-the-Creator type, but merely an advance scout who is looking for suitable planets for his doomed people to colonize. He shows Lilith many wonders, and leaves her, at her own request, far away from Odam's cave, yet the only new skills he teaches her are a more efficient method of making fire, the principle of the lever, and how to add sides and keel to a raft.

I don't read Russian, so I cannot comment upon the fidelity of the translation; however, the English is smooth and idiomatic, with no sign that the book was ever written in any other language. The plot unfolds slowly, giving the reader time to become acquainted with Odam and Lilith, as well as the customs of their tribe. There is a flowing quality to the prose which conveys the sense of time unmeasured, and, therefore, of activity unhurried. The alien, whom Lilith calls the Nameless One, is an especially sympathetic character—a man from a totally rational culture who finds himself falling in love. . . . Of course, Odam takes a second wife, Heva by name, and she is a rather unusual member of the tribe, too, although not so outstanding as Lilith. In fact, it is from jealousy at her predecessor's artistic ability that she, too, begins to mix clays and fruit juices with which to paint her pottery and the walls of the cave.

There is much here about Woman as culture bearer and Woman as name-giver. Macmillan calls it a "children's book." Maybe so, but an adult reader will find much to ponder here, too.
—Charlotte Moslander

DOMINIC by William Steig. Dell Yearling 2335, 1974. 146 pp. 95¢. Age level: 8-12 (hardcover: Farrar Straus, 1972. \$4.50)

I almost see this as a parody of adult heroic fantasy, though I'm not sure how a child would take it. I found it quite amusing.

Dominic, an adventurous young hound dog, sets off one day to see the world. In the course of his travels he meets and aids an assortment of worthy animals such as the elderly pig, Mr. Bartholomew Badger, a jackass named Elijah Hogg, and a goose named Matilda Fox (and etc.). He also has repeated encounters with the Doomsday Gang, a collection of very villainous animals. (On second thought, perhaps this is a Western, only the Lone Ranger never got the girl.)

I enjoyed this thoroughly. And Mr. Steig's pen and ink sketches are delightful.

—Leslie Bloom

LET ME HEAR YOU WHISPER by Paul Zindel. Illus. by Stephen Gammell. Harper and Row, 1974. 44 pp. \$4.95.

This is a play that was originally published in *Scholastic Voice Magazine*, so I guess it's aimed at teenagers.

The action takes place at Abadāba, the American Biological Association Development for The Advancement of Brain Analysis. Helen, a new cleaning woman, discovers that the dolphin currently being worked with has hidden his ability to talk out of hatred for humanity. However, if he doesn't talk, he will be destroyed.

It's hard to review a play just from reading the script. It reads fairly well, but I can't visualize how it would come across on stage. The illustrations are excellent. Production and design are good. This is very definitely a reading copy, and there is a separate edition for anyone who'd want to produce the play.

—Leslie Bloom

Reviews

FINAL STAGE: THE ULTIMATE SCIENCE FICTION ANTHOLOGY, ed. by Edward L. Ferman and Barry N. Malzberg. Charterhouse (McKay), 1974. 308 pp. \$7.95 (paperback: Penguin, 1975. \$2.50)

I include the subtitle because it is so outrageous, and because the editors, in the introduction, admit that there ain't no such animal as the "ultimate" story on any given sf theme.

These stories were commissioned for this volume, but two have been in magazines: Ellison's "Catman" (Future Sex category, and I can't remember where I first read it), and Asimov's "That Thou Art Mindful of Him" (Robots and Androids, magazine credit given on the copyright page). The Ellison is a marvelous story of marital and generational conflict, the Asimov an awkward rehash of old plots. The Future Sex section also includes Joanna Russ's "An Old Fashioned Girl," which explores sex role reversal in a very basic way, and which I found somewhat irritating. The other stories are by Frederick Pohl, Poul Anderson, Kit Reed, Brian W. Aldiss, Dean R. Koontz, Harry Harrison, Robert Silverberg, Barry N. Malzberg, James Tiptree, Jr., and Philip K. Dick.

All of these stories, with the exception of the Harrison, work pretty well, and are worth reading. The Harrison, "Space Rats of the CCC," tries too hard to parody space opera, particularly (I think) the Lensman books, which I've always felt had a lot of conscious self parody in between the space battles (remember Kinnison masquerading as a pulp writer?).

In addition to the fiction, the book has afterwords by each author, and brief bibliographies of related stories and novels.

As ten of the twelve stories are good to excellent, and the remaining two are at least readable, I rate this as a pretty good anthology.

—Leslie Bloom

[Many of you have heard about the brouhaha surrounding the initial hardcover publication of my story "Catman". . . . There was some unauthorized rewriting done by the editor at the original hardcover house that (to my mind) crippled the story. I wasn't alone. It happened to Robert Silverberg and to Poul Anderson, also. . . . Penguin Books . . . have scrupulously restored the stories (and even the Afterwords written by the three of us) to their original texts. Poul, Bob and I now heartily recommend this fine anthology to you. . . .
—Harlan Ellison]

WEB OF EVERYWHERE, by John Brunner. Bantam Q8398, 1974. 148 p. \$1.25

Brunner's exceptional skill and ability to create characters comes very close to pulling this off. As it is, the novel is absorbing and relatively fast-moving and it seems to be saying something, yet misses being significant by a hair's-breadth. In essence, it describes a world mostly devastated by the inevitable nuclear blow-up, but where some livable or even lovely places remain and these, of course are gobbled up by the rich, the poor being poorer as of time immemorial. Transportation has been enormously simplified by the invention of the "skelter," which is a matter transmitter—a doorway to anywhere. Thus those who can afford a skelter and the needed codes, can hop-skip around the world at will—live in one hemisphere and work in another. The only thing that is forbidden is any trifling with the abandoned areas of the world, those which represent the pre-blowup periods and this dictum is enforced as a criminal offense, for reasons which rather escaped me. Anyway, the protagonists (there are two) are in cahoots to visit these forbidden places and to photograph them, for reasons of their own, which again rather escape me. There is also a girl who comes out of an isolated Brazilian community, rather like the Amish of today, for whom practically everything in this new world is sinful. And that's it. That's the whole story. Nothing much happens except an inordinate amount of soul-searching on the part of the characters who seem to be blaming themselves for things which likewise escape me. In a nutshell, the whole world is paranoid and everybody has an outsize guilt complex. Why? I dunno. Which is not to say that I am downgrading this book. Anything John Brunner does is done so well that it is definitely worth the time to read it.

—Samuel Mines

C.S. LEWIS: A BIOGRAPHY, by Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974. 308 pp. \$6.95 (paperback: Harcourt Harvest HB331, 1976. \$3.95)

British sf people will already have seen the first edition of the official C. S. Lewis biography, now available in the States. This is urgent news of course to anybody interested in sf, children's lit, British academic life, Christian theology, Renaissance-literary criticism or even the life of C. S. Lewis.

Of the two biographers, Green is a true expert on children's books and the related adventure-romance tradition (Haggard, Kipling) of the past hundred years. No doubt thanks to Green, there is irreplaceable source-material here both on the Narnias and on Lewis' 'adult' fiction. I suspect children's-lit classes for the Ed.-school majors will pillage Green & Hooper.

Walter Hooper was Lewis' last secretary. He was (?) an American clergyman now professing literature and editing excellent posthumous Lewis collections. But Hooper must also take chief credit for this book's inadequacy on Lewis' religious position; and he must share with Green the discredit for not demarcating their hero's place in modern letters. The problem seems to be cross-temperamental. In his formally courteous, intellectually conservative manner, C.S. Lewis was a very controversial fellow. He enjoyed argument; he was good at it. The clean prose style of *Screwtape*, of *Perelandra* and the Narnias, was originally honed for defending his viewpoints on religion and literary criticism. Back in the 1920's, he began academic life as what we would call a philosophy major. And temperamentally he never quite adjusted to the fact that intelligent, erudite literary scholars don't like dialectics and can't take the kind of independent criticism it implies.

In *C.S. Lewis*, there's no evidence either author shares their hero's relish for arguing. Page 229 has a revealing anecdote about Hooper popping a mint into his mouth before the visit of a hardshell Southern fundamentalist. (Since the visitor was a man who could recognize a man, he had no trouble recognizing the Christianity behind Lewis' pipe and port wine, after he appeared.) Even more unlike Lewis' own intellectual style is the suggestion that the doctrine of original sin "seems to be coming back into fashion" (p. 188)—because of a novel by William Golding!

Many LUNA readers will remain politely uninterested in Lewis' religion. The point is, the biographers' skittish failure on this aspect of their subject's intellectual life, carries over to their dealings with his fiction and criticism. Lewis' fiction for instance is controversial just by existing. It was written in the thickest of the academic confusion—both in Britain and the States—about so-called U and non-U literary forms. If you wrote humorous verse like Ogden Nash (and Pope); or detective stories (like Dashiell Hammett (and *Hamlet*); or sf like Lewis (and Jonathan Swift); your books were necessarily, automatically inferior to 'realistic' everyday autobiographical fiction like—? well, like the Creative-Writer instructor's at the nearest college.

Today of course sf classes have replaced Pope, Swift, *Hamlet* and grammar in the college catalogue. *Perelandra* and the Narnias are perfectly U. But Lewis originally wrote his fiction (and his related argumentative criticism) when the old prejudices were alive and well. And so in 1954 he felt it wise to remove himself from the Oxford which resented equally his Ransom trilogy and the 1954-5 trilogy of his colleague Tolkien, and take a Cambridge lecturer's chair.

For the chronological details of his academic life, for the true names of the schools and 1919 love disguised in Lewis's own *Surprised by Joy*, read *C.S. Lewis*. But if you want to know the issues involved in the most "exciting and dramatic" debate ever held at the Oxford Socratic club—between Lewis and the professional philosopher, G.E.M. Anscombe—you are only fed the factual data on pp. 227-8 and the opinion of each contestant that he/she won the argument. Green & Hooper don't summarize the intellectual issues. And there is the same blank elsewhere in their treatment of Lewis on education and politics.

So the reader is left with a useful "private life" that does not pretend to replace Lewis' own *Surprised by Joy* and the selected *Letters*: 1955, 1966. For a hardcover, the price is low. Properly: there is a good public awaiting this book.

—Mark Purcell

BIZZARRERIES AND FANTASIES OF GRANDVILLE. Introd. and Commentary by Stanley Appelbaum. Dover, 1974. xix, 165 pp. \$4.00 paper

Grandville's magnificent and exhaustive explorations of the mental underground make fascinating viewing. There is evidence, the commentator points out, that the famous illustrations by Tenniel for the Lewis Carroll "Alice" books derive in part from Grandville's example, but that's not the only inspiration he's passed on. The surrealists of a century later, and the dadaists earlier than that, owe a great deal to this French master of the absurd and bizarre. What impresses me, as an artist, beyond Grandville's startling invention, is his sensitivity to the fine details of his art. A dog is not just recognizable—it is the quintessence of dogness. A cat, an alligator, a person—all share the same bizarre or reversed worlds, but each retains that irreducible quantum of personality which takes Grandville beyond the realm of the nightmare and satire, and into the realm of warm, understanding humor. A beautiful book, well worth the price.

—Greg Bear

IN DREAMS AWAKE, ed. by Leslie Fiedler. Dell/Laurel Books, 1975. 119 pp. \$1.75 paper

This is no ordinary anthology. Leslie Fiedler is Samuel L. Clemens Professor of English at the University of New York at Buffalo, a distinguished teacher and author of several novels. What is important about *In Dreams Awake* is not so much the collection of stories here anthologized, but the introduction, in which Professor Fiedler attempts an in-depth analysis of science fiction. He writes: "Science fiction may be the literature of dreams, but its dreams are those of men dreaming they are awake." What this somewhat cryptic utterance implies is further amplified: "Claimed on the one hand by academics who need it to bring life into dying classes in traditional literature, it has been kidnapped on the other by a revivalist generation in search of disreputable new scriptures to replace the too-respectable old ones. Between them they have broken down the walls of the cozy ghetto which Gernsback created in which two generations of sf writers were happy as bugs—immune to serious criticism, and at home with friends." What the professor is driving at is that sf has been adopted by such outside movements as the drug culture (replacing an older whiskey culture) or the weird commune movement, whose extreme is the Manson family. He points out that the only book the police found in the possession of Charles Manson was a Heinlein book "which had apparently provided some of the ritual surrounding the Tate murders." This sounds to me like guilt by association, an unforgiveable laxity in logic.

Moreover, if one examines the stories here included, the impression grows that the good professor, for all his erudite analysis, does not really understand what science fiction is all about. To include Poe's "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion," Mark Twain's "Three Thousand Years Among the Microbes" and "The Tartarus of Maids" by Herman Melville, is clear indication that Fiedler thinks any story with an eerie atmosphere is science fiction. Mark Twain wasn't even aiming for an eerie atmosphere; he was having his usual fun with the human race. Fiedler apparently misses the point that science fiction, while it may well be escape literature (the stuff that dreams are made of) for many readers, it is, above all, the literature of speculation, of prophecy if you will. The concept of intellectual speculation which is its bedrock seems to have escaped him. To equate it with Nazi dreams of domination is doing science fiction an injustice, granted that some early stories perpetuated the myth we were nurtured on—of the leader on a white horse saving mankind from a horrible fate. This is, after all, the same dream fabric as permeates religion, that a father figure will come to the rescue. It is not so much basic to the literature as a hangover from our early conditioning.

By all means take a look at Prof. Fiedler's introduction and his several analyses. To some extent they remind me of the old story Jack Woodford used to tell about professional writers who saw their stories analyzed in college classes, with marginal notes explaining what the author was trying to do in each segment. And the writer would go mildly hysterical with laughter because he wasn't trying to do anything of the sort. He was writing a story, writing it according to those well-known rules of suspense and conflict which always go into the making of a good story.

—Samuel Mines

A TOLKIEN COMPASS, ed. by Jared Lobdell. Open Court, 1975. 201 pp. \$2.95 paper, \$7.95 hardcover

MASTER OF MIDDLE-EARTH: THE FICTION OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN, by Paul H. Kocher. Houghton Mifflin, 1973. 247 pp. \$2.95 paper

TOLKIEN'S WORLD, by Randel Helms. Houghton Mifflin, 1974. xii, 167 pp. \$7.95, \$2.95 paper

As a reader of the chronicles of Middle-Earth before they made the big time, I find myself annoyed with most of the scholarly studies of Tolkien. Most seem to be academic bullshit written by people who have lost the ability to enjoy a good story, or if they enjoy a story they feel so guilty they try to justify their liking by a usually irrelevant analysis of the tale. Faugh! But there are a few exceptions.

A Tolkien Compass is drawn from papers presented (and projected) for the various Conferences on Middle Earth. The single exception is the final piece, "Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*" by J.R.R.T. himself, almost worth the price of admission. While the other ten essays are worth reading (even if we disagree with them and proceed to ignore them), I found some better than others. Bonniejean Christensen's "Gollum's Character Transformation in *The Hobbit*" actually shows the changes in editions by presenting passages dealing with Gollum in parallel columns from the 1937 and 1954 versions. The rest are rather typical studies of Tolkien, and reasonably good.

Paul Kocher doesn't really tell us anything we didn't already know, but he does perform a service by pulling together not merely themes in *LotR* but in other of Tolkien's writings as well. He's not perfect and by no means explicates everything, but he has sense enough to know his brief summaries are no substitutes for reading the real thing. He examines the ethnology of Middle-Earth, the Cosmic Order & the nature of evil, and the whole of Middle-Earth rather competently. He goes on to explicate other of Tolkien's writings ("Leaf by Niggle," "The Lay of Aarotou & Itroun," "Farmer Giles of Ham," "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth . . .," "Smith of Wootton Major," "Imram," and "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil.") All in all a decent compilation of Middle-Earth lore.

And Helms? Well, he tries. In one sense it is a watered-down version of Kocher's. He has his own viewpoint, and who am I to say it isn't valid? It just doesn't strike me as a book to own.

Of the three books above, if I had my druthers I'd take Kocher's book complemented with a copy of Foster's *Guide to Middle-Earth*.
—J. B. Post

ON A PLANET ALIEN, by Barry N. Malzberg. Pocket Books, 1974. 144 pp. 95¢

THE DAY OF THE BURNING, by Barry N. Malzberg. Ace, 1974. 166 pp. 95¢

Two roughly contemporaneous Malzberg novels, dealing as usual, with paranoia and possible reality.

On a Planet Alien is the more superficially conventional sf novel. A survey mission on a primitive planet has more than usual initial difficulties making contact with the local aliens. After contact is finally made, the captain becomes increasingly suspicious of his fellow crew members' activities. Is he going insane? Are they plotting? And what about his superiors on Earth, who won't let the captain abort the mission. . . ?

The Day of the Burning is the latest of that group of Malzberg novels wherein an Earthman is given an impossible task to complete in order to prevent the destruction of Earth. In this case the Earthman is a New York City welfare worker. His task is to document a long-in-the-past gap in the maintenance history of one of his cases. As is usual with Malzberg it is never quite clear whether the protagonist is hallucinating or not. There are clues, and a knowledge of the author's *Beyond Apollo* is helpful.

Both books are written in standard Malzbergian style. If you have an ingrained aversion to novels written in the present tense, Malzberg is not for you. Otherwise, these are enjoyable books, though repetitive in theme and style of much of Malzberg's work.

—Leslie Bloom

NEWTON AND THE QUASI-APPLE, by Stanley Schmidt. Doubleday, 1975. \$5.95

This was rather refreshing, after all the comparatively exotic stuff I have been reading of late—it is straightforward, old-fashioned sf, in the shape of a case of culture shock inflicted upon a primitive culture by the unwitting interference of a group of interstellar travellers.

Suppose medieval Europe had produced a combination Copernicus/Galileo, who had just begun to present his theories, when along came a group of jugglers whose props did not follow the laws of gravitation (here they are called quasi-matter). I'm not going to spoil the story by telling how the interstellar travelers get out of this one without revealing their origins, but I guarantee a couple of hours of enjoyable light reading to anyone who wants to find out for him/her self.

—Charlotte Moslander

2000 A.D.; ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF SCIENCE FICTION PULPS, by Jacques Sadoul. Henry Regnery (180 N. Michigan Ave, Chicago, Ill. 60601) 1975. 176 pp. \$7.95 paper, \$17.95 cloth

Most readers or libraries will never own the original sf pulps, and the microform reprints do not do justice to the gaudy originals. This affectionate study clearly reproduces several hundred black and white interior illustrations as well as many covers in full color, some full-size, all with artist and issue indicated, from the 1926-1953 period. All the familiar names are here: Paul, Laurence, Wesso, Dold, Leydenfrost, Brundage, Finlay, Bok, Schneeman to Emsh and Frazetta. I missed Edd Cartier's emphatic and appealing work. The 8 chapters group the illustrations by theme, such as The Great Galactics, The Age of Robots, Dream Weapons, Machines & Cities of the Future, and each is introduced by a brief commentary. BEMs! Breast-plated maidens threatened by lustful extraterrestrials bent upon unimaginable miscegenation. It's all here, often in living color. Van Vogt contributes an introduction, and an illustrated appendix summarizes basic astronomy. There is an index by source magazine (publisher) but no illustrator index. Its major value will be to the collector, fan and larger library collecting either sf or popular art and illustration.

—Neil Barron

BORN WITH THE DEAD, by Robert Silverberg. Random House, 1974. 267 pp. \$5.95 (paperback: Vintage V447, 1975. \$1.95)

Bob Silverberg continues his steady march toward impressive maturity with the three novellas in this volume. The insight and the depth of writing marks still another milestone in his growth as a serious writer, not just of science fiction, but of significant fiction by any label. The three novellas contained here, "Born with the Dead," "Thomas the Proclaimer," and "Going," are not in themselves major works of art, nor free of fault, but they are strong and memorable works. All are concerned with death and the tantalizing riddle of what may come after. There is even a hint, in "Born with the Dead," of his previous approach to a kind of immortality in the novel *To Live Again*, where the dead are in a sense preserved through tapings of their words and ideas carried to such a length that the mechanical library takes on its own life and seems to be truly alive again. In "Born with the Dead" he proposes another idea, that the dead may be reactivated and live another life in a world of the dead. The plot here concerns a grieving husband who follows his dead wife around the world, finding she is no longer even slightly interested in him, although she loved him devotedly while alive. "Thomas the Proclaimer" is a series of vignettes which, in a fragmented, episodic manner, gradually create and follow to conclusion the tragedy of a rabble-rousing evangelist who in one dazzling, triumphant moment, caused the sun to stand still. Although this story has moments of great power, it is overlong and to me, at least, not entirely successful. "Going" is a kind of euthanasia story—man can live almost indefinitely until he chooses of his own volition to go. And the story explores the inner struggles of a talented composer who has decided that he has experienced all that life offers and the time has come for him to go. This story too, might have been shorter, but is hardly marred by the extra length—it is moving and strong. All in all, these are memorable stories from a fine writer.

—Samuel Mines

THE SECRET GALACTICS, by A. E. van Vogt. Reward Books (Prentice-Hall), 1974. 215 pp. \$2.45 paper

After more than 35 books, most of them heavily involved with technology or "wheels-within-wheels" complications and paradoxes, the old master tries something new. Structurally, this is an invasion story. At least three different types of aliens have made themselves at home here on earth, preparatory to a full-scale take-over of one kind or another. They have all assumed human form—bred from the embryo—and are, in fact, part human emotionally. They are very much taken with Earth women, many have married Earth women. And this is the real nub of the plot. The invasion is incidental. What van Vogt is really after, is an attempt to show that the sex drive is paramount, that the war between men and women colors and controls all of man's activities and that no matter how important the man, how critical his work, he is always worried about what the little woman will say if he stays out late, doesn't give a good account of his actions and so on. No doubt, in the hands of a George Bernard Shaw this could have been a devastating satire, but unhappily, van Vogt neither meant it as a satire, nor is he equipped to handle this kind of story. His characters are stiff and unreal, the point is labored and belabored, and there isn't enough of the invasion plot to rescue the faltering main theme. Too bad, we all know how superb van Vogt can be with his type of material. I'm just afraid this isn't it.

—Samuel Mines

NO DIRECTION HOME: AN ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE-FICTION STORIES, by Norman Spinrad. Pocket Books 7887, 1975. 238 pp. \$1.25

These stories all seem to have been inspired by fads and subcultures of the late-sixties and early-seventies: hallucinogenic drugs, motorcycles, rock groups, Vietnam, concern for the ecology, gurus, Black Power, and scandals in professional sports competition. They are well-written and believable, and some, "The Big Flash," for example, give very valid warnings; but I, dweller in the midst of economic recession, a shrinking job market, inflation, and a U.S. withdrawal from Southeast Asia, find all these stories somewhat irrelevant to my current concerns, yet too familiar to be classed as "escapist." Maybe McLuhan was right: society seems to be changing too fast for the print medium to keep up with it. The value of this anthology will be historic—so buy a copy, and keep it for twenty years.

—Charlotte Moslander

THE MANY WORLDS OF POUL ANDERSON, ed. by Roger Elwood. Chilton, 1974. 324 pp. \$6.95 (paperback: *The Book of Poul Anderson*. DAW UW1176, 1975. \$1.50)

There are some fascinating stories in this collection of ten by Anderson. As Elwood points out, his ability to create a strange world approaches genius. "Epilogue" is a masterful sample, a vision of Earth with humans gone, taken over by intelligent predatory robots, its ecology metal and silica, fed by radiant energy. An impressive, frightening story. Equally good, in quite another way is "The Longest Voyage." Picture a seafaring buccaneer—Drake, Cook, or any of the old freebooters, coming upon a South Pacific island for loot and plunder and finding the natives worshipping a crippled star ship and its lone survivor. The interesting thing here is how quickly these medieval mariners grasped the whole idea—understood it and dealt with it. Beautiful story. The weak ones, I thought, were "The Sheriff of Canyon Gulch" in which Anderson let himself be beguiled into collaboration with Gordon Dickson on one of Dickson's silly sf westerns; and "Cleopatra" which is not a story, but a detailed description of a mythical planet, like a chemistry paper, and if there is a point to this it escapes me.

The book also has two long critical analyses of Anderson's work, one by Patrick McGuire and the other by Sandra Miesel. My reaction to this kind of thing is that the author, if he reads them, will likely become mildly hysterical, but if you happen to enjoy having a third party point out to you what the writer was doing here and there, I think you'll find Miesel's essay the better of the two. But for the actual stories, including the classic "Queen of Air and Darkness," this is a noteworthy anthology.

—Samuel Mines

VOYAGES IN SPACE: A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF INTERPLANETARY FICTION. Ferret Fantasy (distr. by Donald M. Grant, West Kingston, Rhode Island 02892) 1975. 80 pp. \$8.50 paper

A descriptively annotated bibliography of 263 books and magazine stories, with a sampling of 19 titles prior to 1900. Each numbered entry provides basic bibliographic information, including notes on various editions, and a brief summary indicating the distinctive thematic elements. A helpful if somewhat limited survey which usefully supplements Gove's *The imaginary voyage in prose fiction* (1941) and Marjorie Nicolson's *Voyages to the moon* (1960). A summary postscript shows the rapid growth in this species of fiction in the 1800's. A list of 5 historical works and an author index conclude this slim and somewhat overpriced volume, which was issued as Ferret Fantasy's Christmas Annual for 1974 in an edition of 500. For the specialist and larger library only.

—Neil Barron

HIGH CRYSTAL, by Martin Caidin. Arbor House, 1974. 229 pp. \$6.95 (paperback: Warner 76-408, 1975. \$1.25)

In its minor way, this is an entertaining book for an hour or two's reading—if one doesn't mind the archaeological absurdities. The hero is Steve Austin, a cyborg with more than human physical powers, courtesy of the U.S. military, for whom he is obligated to work whether he likes it or not. In the book at hand, he is on the trail of a lost city in the Andes. The builders of the city, while mostly "stone age," nevertheless had a sophisticated laser technology, and were literate (in an area where there was no known pre-Columbian literacy), many thousands of years before anyone else on earth. And the father and daughter archaeological team manage to decipher the script, with great rapidity (like an hour or two).

As archaeological sf this doesn't make the grade, nor does it make it as a lost civilization type of story, as all you learn about is one facet of technology (what was their subsistence base?). Even taken solely as slick adventure fiction this is only moderately competent.

—Leslie Bloom

AN ALIEN HEAT, by Michael Moorcock. Harper and Row, 1973. 158 pp. \$4.95

THE HOLLOW LANDS, by Michael Moorcock. Harper and Row, 1974. 182 pp. \$6.95

Jherek Carnelian is an inhabitant of an Earth near the End of Time, when humanity has limitless power, which we no longer understand, virtual immortality, wherein we become bored, and an effete tendency to follow fads and keep "collections" of the time- and space-travelers who stop by. Into this world is dropped Mrs. Amelia Underwood, a most attractive—and proper—lady of Victorian England. Carnelian decides to fall in love with her, and, when she is spirited back to her own time, he pursues her thence.

What follows is a farcical satire on Victorian mores as seen through the eyes of the decadent (to the Victorians) Carnelian. Of course, some of our own customs and attitudes get laughed at a bit in the process, too. In fact, the whole point of these two books (volumes I and II of *The Dancers at the End of Time*) is that we humans are a pretty sad group at any time, be it while suppressing most of our natural impulses, as in Mrs. Underwood's time, or becoming so enthralled with the unlimited power available in Carnelian's that we lose all real creativity in an orgy of self-indulgence. The mere fact that this is presented in novel form says something about Victorian times, in which every story had to have a moral to make it acceptable, and our own, in which every moral must be surrounded by a story to make it more palatable.

The characters are all stereotypes of one sort or another, except Lord Jagged of Canaria, who appears to have some symbolic function—but that is usually how things are in works of this type. The plot is deceptively interesting, and the shallower readers may laugh with ignorant amusement all the way through. The descriptions of nineteenth-century England are delightfully Dickensian, and the inclusion of a conversation between Jherek Carnelian and H. G. Wells is a touch of perfection. This is a truly promising series of books—I look forward to reading the next one.

—Charlotte Moslander

RINGS OF ICE, by Piers Anthony. Avon 19448, 1974. 191 p. 95¢

This is one of the more successful catastrophe novels I've run into. The earth is engulfed in torrential rains, as the result of melting ice rings, similar to Saturn's. A group of refugees, including a woman scientist who predicted the rain, and a transvestite, try to escape to high enough ground so that they can survive the vast increase in sea level. They encounter the usual problems of ecological change, hostile groups of other refugees, etc. What makes the book particularly interesting is that the group itself is the protagonist, as it develops from a collection of strangers thrown together at random, into a cohesive unit, coping with a nearly impossible situation. It's my impression that books of this type tend to have single heroes, either functioning on their own or very clearly as leaders. *Rings of Ice* is a reversal of this pattern, which I welcome. (The point of view is mostly that of Zena, the scientist, but she is in no way "the leader.")

The writing and dialog are sometimes awkward, but there's enough of interest in the book to more than make up for it.

—Leslie Bloom

BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR, No. 3, ed. by Terry Carr. Ballantine 24063, 1974. 368 pp. \$1.50

This is a solid best of the etc. anthology. Of course, one has one's own favorites which don't get included (Michael Bishop and George R.R. Martin don't even make the honorable mentions list), but Carr is one of our more reliable editors.

The book includes "Something Up There Likes Me" by Alfred Bester, "The World as Will and Wallpaper" by R.A. Lafferty, "Breckenridge and the Continuum" by Robert Silverberg, "Rumfuddle" by Jack Vance, "Tell Me All About Yourself" by F.M. Busby, "The Deathbird" by Harlan Ellison, "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" by Vonda N. McIntyre, "The Death of Dr. Island" by Gene Wolfe, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" by Ursula K. Le Guin, "Sketches Among the Ruins of My Mind" by Philip Jose Farmer, "The Women Men Don't See" by James Tiptree Jr.

I was most impressed by the Lafferty, the Silverberg, the Wolfe, and the Tiptree. I think the Vance and the Le Guin are the weakest stories, but all the stories are well worth reading.

—Leslie Bloom

EARLY WRITINGS IN SCIENCE AND SCIENCE FICTION BY H. G. WELLS, ed. by Robert Philmus and David Y. Hughes. University of California Press, 1975. xiv, 249 pp. \$12.50

These 28 hitherto unreprinted pieces from the 1880's and 1890's, linked by notes and commentary, are intended to provide readers with an idea of Wells' intellectual development and his ideas relating to science. These essays, reviews and fiction, selected from over 200 published during this period, also permit the reader to see the genesis and development of ideas later found in *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *The First Men in the Moon*, among Wells' other scientific romances. The familiar duality of Wells' vision is clearly evident in these pieces, wherein man is looked at from an impersonal cosmic viewpoint and from a human one as well, with the viewpoint shifting toward the human in Wells' later works. This duality is perhaps most evident in *The Time Machine* (1895), and partial versions of two early drafts of this seminal work are included, which will interest all Wells enthusiasts. Biology and evolution are discussed in other pieces, which repeatedly suggest a rather unexalted place in nature for man, a transitory and anthropocentric species. A selective bibliography with abstracts of Wells' science journalism from the 1887-1901 period, an index of included writings, and a name index conclude the book.

Wells is rarely dull in these essays and short fiction, and the scholarly apparatus is helpful rather than intrusive. Although the most helpful single study of Wells' sf is Bernard Bergonzi's *The Early H.G. Wells: a Study of the Scientific Romances* (1961), this collection is a useful and interesting supplement. Larger libraries will want it as well as sf readers interested in the development of this towering figure in the history of science fiction.

—Neil Barron

THE 1974 ANNUAL WORLD'S BEST SF, ed. by Donald A. Wollheim. DAW UY1109, 1974. 280 pp. \$1.25

Another generally superior anthology from the Wollheim gatherings. The list of contributors is impressive: Fred Pohl, Robert Sheckley, Jack Williamson, R. A. Lafferty, Clifford Simak and Harlan Ellison, among others. And the stories range from some whimsy by Sheckley with "A Suppliant in Space," through a long, heavy piece of technical-adventure called "Doomship" which is the result of a collaboration between Fred Pohl and Jack Williamson, to some new wave writing by Harlan Ellison in "Deathbird." Most of the stories are very good. "Deathbird" produced in me the predictable irritation with new wave writing, but it contained a short piece about the death of a dog which was genuinely moving and a signal, if anyone is listening, that Ellison can write directly and effectively when he wants to. The outstanding story in the collection by far was "Death and Designation Among the Asadi" by Michael Bishop. It's long, it's heavy going, and at times it is clearly revolting. On top of that there is almost no action and practically no plot development. Yet the suspense is almost unbearable and the reader is gripped with a kind of horrid fascination that keeps him riveted through all the long and painfully detailed scenes. The plot is simple: how does a xenologist (which I interpret as one who studies the customs of strangers or aliens) break through a total communications barrier to understand an alien way of life? In this case he does it by being dropped into a jungle and living among a kind of semi-human people he cannot understand, join, or communicate with in any way, yet tries to make sense out of what they are doing. A brilliant tour de force by the author.

—Samuel Mines

AUTHORS' BOOK LISTING, comp. by Donald H. Tuck. Published by the Compiler (139 East Risdon Road, Lindisfarne, Tasmania 7015, Australia) 1975. 32 p. 50c

Don Tuck originally had this booklet prepared for the recent World Science Fiction Convention held in Australia last August. However it is probably available direct from the compiler. As the title indicates, it covers only hard cover and paperback titles. The authors represented are John Brunner, A. Bertram Chandler, Edmund Cooper, Philip Jose Farmer, Ursula K. Le Guin, Michael Moorcock and A.E. Van Vogt, and their books published through 1974 are listed.

—Walter R. Cole

BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES OF THE YEAR (Third Annual Collection), ed. by Lester del Rey. Dutton, 1974. 251 pp. \$7.95

This is a workmanlike collection, with something for everybody. It contains stories by such dependables as Clifford Simak, Thomas Scortia, R.A. Lafferty, Fred Pohl and Poul Anderson. A number of them have, if memory doesn't fail me, appeared in other anthologies—Bester's story "Something Up There Likes Me," Norman Spinrad's two stories: "A Thing of Beauty" and "The National Pastime," Cogswell's "The Population Implosion" and Simak's "Construction Shack." Some of these, like "The Population Implosion" and "The National Pastime" are light spoofs. The Bester story is clever and ingenious. But the outstanding story of the book is Poul Anderson's "The Problem of Pain," a powerful piece of work done with incredible sensitivity and compassion. It deals with a touchy subject: religious faith, and it manages to compress into the scope of a short story, a remarkably moving emotional experience and an uncompromising critical search. There are other good stories in the book, but this one alone makes it worthwhile.

—Samuel Mines

PATRON OF THE ARTS, by William Rotsler. Ballantine 24062, 1974. 210 pp. \$1.25

This is really a short novel from *Vertex*, and a more or less novel length sequel. Billionaire Brian Thorne arranges to have his wife sit for a brilliant artist in a new form, the sensatron, which combines a three dimensional image with multiple sensory output. His wife ultimately leaves him for the artist, and then the couple disappear—from a locked room. In the sequel, Thorne goes to Mars, begins to fall in love with another woman, and then discovers he is being manipulated out of his financial empire by an apparently perfect imposter.

This novel is well written, has some interesting ideas, and moves along well. But Rotsler is obsessed (or at least his hero is) with female physical beauty to a degree I find very disturbing, even after untold years of reading heroic fantasy. While the major women characters are also bright and competent people, in between them Thorne goes through a hell of a lot of women who aren't. I guess this is something of a male wish fulfillment fantasy, though more interesting and sophisticated than your average heroic fantasy piece.
—Leslie Bloom

ALSO RECEIVED:

- Best Dr. Poggioli Detective Stories, by T.S. Stribling. Dover, 1975. \$3.00
 Bonstonofavitch! A Novel of Madness, by Thomas Carlisle. Angst World Library (12414 Hesby St., North Hollywood, Calif. 91607) 1974. \$3.95paper
 The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage, tr. by S.L. MacGregor Mathers. Dover, 1975. \$3.50 (repr of 1900 ed)
 The Capricorn and Other Fantasy Stories, by H.L. Prosser. Angst World Library, 1974. \$1.00
 The Chambered Tomb, by Charlotte Hunt. Ace 10240, May 1975. \$1.25
 Embryo, by Louis Charbonneau. Warner 86-004, Feb. \$1.25 (based on screenplay)
 The Evil That Men Do, by John Brunner; and The Purlined Planet, by Lin Carter. Belmont Tower 50787, 1974. \$1.25 (orig. 1969. reviewed LUNA Monthly 9)
 From the Land of Fear, by Harlan Ellison. Belmont Tower 50750, Nov. 1974. 95¢ (orig. 1967)
 The Fury Out of Time, by Lloyd Biggle, Jr. Leisure Books LB318ZK, 1975. \$1.25 (c1965)
 Galaxy 666, by Pel Torro. Leisure LB259NK. 95¢ (c1968)
 The Godwhale, by T.J. Bass. Ballantine 24647, Nov. \$1.50 (2 ptg. orig. 1974)
 The King's Indian: Stories & Tales, by John Gardner. Ballantine 24806, Feb. \$2.25 (hardcover: Knopf, 1974. \$8.95. reviewed LUNA Monthly 59)
 Little Fuzzy, by H. Beam Piper. Ace 48490, Jan. \$1.25 (c1962)
 The Metal Smile, ed. by Damon Knight. Belmont Tower 50722, 1974. 95¢ (orig. 1967)
 Metropolis, by Thea von Harbou. Ace 52831, Jan. \$1.25 (orig. 1927)
 Perry Rhodan 86: Blazing Sun, by Clark Darlton. Ace 66070, Jan. \$1.25
 Perry Rhodan 87: The Starless Realm, by Clark Darlton. Ace 66071, Jan. \$1.25
 Polymath, by John Brunner. DAW UY1217, 1975. \$1.25 (2 ptg. orig. 1974. reviewed LUNA Monthly 57)
 Psycho, by Robert Bloch. Award AQ1505, Dec. \$1.25 (c1959)
 Science, Numbers, and I, by Isaac Asimov. Ace 75456, Jan. \$1.50 (essays; rev and updated)
 Star drift, by John Morressy. Popular 00256, 1975. \$1.25 (orig title: Nail Down the Stars. Walker, 1973. \$6.95. reviewed LUNA Monthly 57)
 The Stigmata of Dr. Constantine, by Tom Dulack. Harpers Magazine Press, 1975. \$8.95
 Surrounded, by Brian Coffey. Bobbs-Merrill, 1975. \$5.95 (mystery)
 Time Is the Simplest Thing, by Clifford D. Simak. Leisure LB198NK, 1974. 95¢ (c1971)
 Uncle Abner: Master of Mysteries, by Melville Davisson Post. Dover, 1975. \$2.75 (repr of 1918 ed)
 Wandor's Ride, by Roland Green. Avon 27441. 95¢ (3 ptg. orig. 1973, reviewed LUNA Monthly 57)

INDEX TO FEATURES

Coming Attractions	11	Lilliputia	21
Coming Events	9	New Books	19
Have You Read?	11	Recent Recordings	18
International Scene	8	Reviews	23
Interview	1	SF and the Cinema	12
		Paul Walker: A Column	14

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